

From Consciousness to Knowledge – The Explanatory Power of Revelation

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I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own personal and independent investigation. Its content is original and all consulted sources are mentioned accordingly in text, notes and references.

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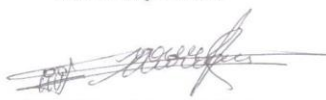
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For Ana

and my family

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: Consciousness, Self-knowledge, Privileged Access, Transparency, Acquaintance, Revelation

Epistemology in philosophy of mind is a difficult endeavor. Those who believe that our phenomenal life is different from other domains suggest that self-knowledge about phenomenal properties is certain and therefore privileged. Usually, this so called privileged access is explained by the idea that we have *direct* access to our phenomenal life. This means, in contrast to perceptual knowledge, self-knowledge is non-inferential. It is widely believed that, this kind of directness involves two different senses: an epistemic sense and a metaphysical sense. Proponents of this view often claim that this is due to the fact that we are acquainted with our current experiences. The acquaintance thesis, therefore, is the backbone in justifying privileged access. Unfortunately the whole approach has a profound flaw.

For the thesis to work, acquaintance has to be a genuine explanation. Since it is usually assumed that any knowledge relation between judgments and the corresponding objects are merely causal and contingent (e.g. in perception), the proponent of the privileged access view needs to show that acquaintance can do the job. In this thesis, however, I claim that the latter cannot be done. Based on considerations introduced by Levine, I conclude that this approach involves either the introduction of ontologically independent properties or a rather obscure knowledge relation. A proper explanation, however, cannot employ either of the two options. The acquaintance thesis is, therefore, bound to fail.

Since the privileged access intuition seems to be vital to epistemology within the philosophy of mind, I will explore alternative justifications. After discussing a number of options, I will focus on the so called revelation thesis. This approach states that by simply having an experience with phenomenal properties, one is in the position to know the essence of those phenomenal properties. I will argue that, after finding a solution for the controversial essence claim, this thesis is a successful replacement explanation which maintains all the virtues of the acquaintance account without necessarily introducing ontologically independent properties or an obscure knowledge relation. The overall solution consists in qualifying the essence claim in the relevant sense, leaving us with an appropriate ontology for phenomenal properties. On the one hand, this avoids employing mysterious independent properties, since this ontological view is physicalist in nature. On the other hand, this approach has the right kind of structure to explain privileged self-knowledge of our phenomenal life. My final conclusion consists in the claim that the privileged access intuition is in fact veridical. It cannot, however, be justified by the popular acquaintance approach, but rather, is explainable by the controversial revelation thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

When Descartes published his *Discourse on the Method* in 1637¹, an outcry went through the philosophic community of the time. By introducing the famous *cogito*² argument to ground knowledge, he provoked a flood of counterarguments against his view. Many philosophers, including David Hume and especially Pierre Gassendi, cast doubts on the Cartesian claim that there is something like foundational knowledge of the self. According to both authors, this knowledge is illusory and far from being as foundational as Descartes's view holds. As a result grounding knowledge in this first principle fails. Over the centuries many others criticized this foundational knowledge claim.³

Apart from the original intended goal, however, the Cartesian enterprise had an interesting effect. With the methodological investigation of 'what cannot be doubted', an intuition about our own mental life was introduced into epistemology, namely the privileged access. The privileged access claims that we are in a special epistemological position towards our own mental states. When we form judgments about these states, those judgments are especially epistemically secure or, one could argue, certain. We, therefore, obtain privileged self-knowledge about our mental life. This approach, even though applied by Descartes to ground knowledge in general, only needs to claim such an epistemic position with respect to self-knowledge. Being an intuition often thought to be entailed by folk psychology, the privileged access, in the beginning, was a great success. For a long time, this idea was quite popular in psychology, but also in philosophy. However, with the rise of behaviorism in the early 20th century, many scholars began to reject this view.

¹ See Descartes 1998.

² Descartes introduced the Latin phrase *cogito ergo sum* in *Principles of Philosophy*. See Descartes 1991.

³ For critics see e.g. Gassendi 1964, Hume 2000, Kierkegaard 1985 and Russell 1967.

In the last years, though, the idea experienced, at least, a partial revival. Due to the growing interest in consciousness, philosophers, psychologists and others from nearby fields, as they rediscovered the epistemic special notions of introspection and self-knowledge. This is especially true in the study of one of the key aspects in the consciousness debate, namely phenomenal consciousness, for here introspection and its resulting self-knowledge are of vital importance. In recent years, psycho-philosophical studies about the reliability of those processes and judgments were conducted, with an ambiguous outcome.⁴ Even though this is not the desired result, the topic *privileged self-knowledge* is back in the philosophical and psychological debate.

Introspection and self-knowledge constitute a vast area of research. On the one hand, it requires research on various aspects of both notions. This includes reliability, investigation of existing models/the possible introduction of new ones, or the analysis of relations with similar processes, e.g. perception. On the other hand, both ideas are closely connected to the study of consciousness, in particular to phenomenal consciousness. Without introspection and the resulting self-knowledge investigation of the metaphysics and epistemology of mind seems a difficult endeavor. This implies that there is or, at least, may be, a reciprocal effect between both research areas. The study of all these issues is, in my opinion, deeply intertwined, making it necessary to investigate more than one topic to gain an overall picture.

Naturally, this cannot be covered by my investigation here. I will focus, therefore, on one key element, namely the privileged access intuition. As seen above, this idea was already employed by Descartes. It is, however, one thing to stipulate this kind of access; it is another to justify it. To generally embrace this view, we need an explanation. The reason is that it is usually widely accepted that a knowledge relation between an object and its corresponding judgment is contingent and causal.⁵ Privileged self-knowledge, however, claims something profoundly different. It is thought to be epistemically more secure or even certain for some philosophers. For the privileged access to exist, this demands a solid justification. My goal, therefore, is

⁴ See especially Hurlburt & Schwitzgebel 2007.

⁵ See e.g. Gertler 2011a and b.

to investigate possible explanations and their implications. I will focus mainly on two approaches⁶, namely acquaintance and revelation.

In the first chapter, I will start my investigation by introducing the main elements. First, I will clarify what privileged self-knowledge is. We will see that the privileged access intuition is captured by two interpretation of the concept, namely by being especially well justified and by applying a special method.⁷ Assuming that most philosophers think that the method to obtain self-knowledge is introspection⁸, I will show that models of this kind of knowledge mostly depend on how they evaluate the privileged access's epistemic claim. Those who believe in the intuition usually think that what makes self-knowledge special is that we have some sort of unmediated or *direct* access to the mental states in question.⁹ Others who deny this idea, split in two groups. On the one hand, there are those who believe that introspection is a genuine, independent process, but hold that it is basically analogous to perception.¹⁰ This means, knowledge obtained via this method is just as contingent and causal as perceptual knowledge. On the other hand, some propose that when we are introspecting, we are actually perceiving. For them, there is no genuine different process to grasp inner mental states. In the end, introspection is to look through our mental states to their outer, intentional objects.¹¹

After characterizing these possible models, I will determine the part of the mental best suited for privileged self-knowledge, namely the phenomenal. The reason is that whether or not the privileged access is a plausible view depends to a certain degree also on its target. Many philosopher and psychologists hold that a great deal of our mental life is far from being obvious to ourselves. The only plausible prospect is often thought to be conscious experience in general and their phenomenal aspects in particular. My focus will, therefore, turn to privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal.

Now, there are many intuitions we have about the phenomenal, the privileged

⁶ I will shortly discuss other alternatives that will, however, be discarded quickly for their insufficiency.

⁷ See especially Gertler 2011b.

⁸ For exceptions see especially Gallois 1996 and Shoemaker 1988, 1990, 1994a, b.

⁹ See Gertler 2012a.

¹⁰ See e.g. Sellars 1963.

¹¹ See e.g. Harman 1990, 1996.

access is only one of them. After listing the most important ideas, I will, however, explicate only two in greater detail. The reason is that both of these concepts constitute key aspects in the context of this discussion.

The first intuition is transparency¹². It deeply influences the ontology of experience. To defend the privileged access, I have to be able to assume a certain range of possible ontologies. If, however, strong transparency is true, then genuine introspection is not even possible. I, therefore, have to reject this implausible consequence and allow only for weaker interpretations of transparency.

The second idea is for many contemporary philosophers the only way to ground the privileged access. Based on Russell's acquaintance approach to knowledge¹³, this intuition is supposed to explain the relevant directness relation with our phenomenal properties. This means, if this explanation is sound, then the privileged access is grounded. I will, however, conclude that this is not the case. The reason is that this form of explanation raises more questions than it answers and is, therefore, deeply mysterious.

In the beginning of the second chapter I will clarify in greater detail what the conditions for the privileged access are. Even though I do not consider any specific account of introspection, it is necessary to defend that, at least, in principle that there is no problem with this notion. I claim that the main threat does not stem from any particular model, but rather from the fact that introspection may not be one coherent process.¹⁴ After concluding that *one* single target, particularly the phenomenal, involves a stable process of introspection, I will discuss the more important issue concerning the epistemic security of self-knowledge about the phenomenal. This entails the introduction and explanation of, at least, some ways knowledge can be epistemically special. The spectrum of those notions includes relatively weak and strong readings.¹⁵ The strongest pair, however, is infallibility and omniscience. The former states that we cannot form false beliefs about our experiences and the latter

¹² The transparency thesis stems from Moore's idea that experiences are diaphanous. See especially Moore 1903.

¹³ See Russell 1967.

¹⁴ See Schwitzgebel 2012.

¹⁵ See Alston 1971 for a detailed list.

that having those experiences is sufficient for knowing them. I conclude that only this pair constitutes certainty in the relevant sense, the condition that I am after.

Since there is, so far, no explanation why self-knowledge about the phenomenal is privileged, I will consider alternative explanations at this point. The question, therefore, shifts to possible justifications for self-knowledge ascriptions. After considering possible candidates, the so called 'epistemic principles', I will conclude that only the revelation thesis¹⁶ has the potential to count as an explanation. Since this thesis states that by having an experience with phenomenal properties, I can know the essence of those properties, it entails a metaphysical component – contrary to any other explanatory alternative, including acquaintance. Revelation, therefore, has to be carefully qualified, so that it does not a) violate physicalism; or b) lose its explanatory power. Since there is a historical and natural relation between revelation and acquaintance, I will discuss this possible form of restriction already in this context. I will, however, conclude that qualifying the revelation thesis by introducing acquaintance as its essence claim is unsuccessful. This is due to the fact that such a thesis inherits all the problems of the acquaintance approach already pointed out in the previous chapter.

The third chapter has two main functions. First, I will analyze different readings of revelation¹⁷. Second, I will investigate what revelation refers to and evaluate possible interpretations of the essence claim. My main focus will circle around the question how the essence claim of every version influences our epistemic position. This means, in one case, that we may know everything that is essentially true about the phenomenal, in another case, that we may know all the essential properties involved. A third, more specific interpretation, claims that we know the concepts that are essential in all possible worlds. According to this version, if a phenomenal concept is stable in every possible world, then we can know it. This knowledge puts us in the position to exclude all properties that are only accidental, leaving us with the essential ones. The task here is to assess the plausibility of those interpretations.¹⁸

Now, analyzing the different readings of revelation, means to put forward the

¹⁶ For details, see e.g. Johnston 1992, Lewis 1995, Russell 1967.

¹⁷ See Stoljar 2009.

¹⁸ For detailed discussion on different accounts of revelation see Damnjanovic 2012.

different ways thesis can be understood. Three different issues come to mind: i) does revelation 'put us in a position to know' or do we simply 'know' the essence of the phenomenal by having an experience with the relevant phenomenal properties? ii) do we already need a concept of essence for the thesis to be true? and iii) what kind of knowledge do we gain, explicit or tacit? In this part of the chapter, I will clarify how one should understand the original, unqualified thesis.

Before I will examine possible essence claims, there is a further aspect of revelation that needs illustration. Even though we consider a version of the revelation thesis that is about experiences, it is not clear whether it refers to the experience itself or the way we understand experiences. The main reason this concern arises is that, according to Stoljar¹⁹, revelation necessarily includes understanding naturally. I will, however, argue that this is not the case. By showing that understanding is not an epistemic, but a psychological principle, I will conclude that it is different from revelation. My view is, therefore, that the latter does not entail the former in the relevant sense. Revelation is, therefore, about experience itself.

As a final task of this chapter, I will investigate different versions of the essence claim. Three interpretations come to mind. First, I will assume that revelation may claim that we can know '*all* essential truths' about the phenomenal. This means that by having an experience with a phenomenal property, I can know all the essential concepts that describe this property. This idea is, however, implausible. It has the absurd result that by having an experience, and without empirical research, I could gain knowledge of the physical concept of a phenomenal property. This means, the experience itself presents me with the way it is instantiated in the brain.²⁰ I will conclude that this version of revelation cannot solve this problem.

A second account of revelation refers to knowledge of '*all* essential properties or facts' that constitute the phenomenal. The advantage of this approach is that, contrary to the first interpretation, we only need to know all essential facts and not all essential truths. This means, we do not need to possess all essential concepts of the phenomenal property in question. At a first glance, this avoids the problem of the

¹⁹ See Stoljar 2009.

²⁰ Lewis 1995 discusses the issue in length.

former account. Damjanovic, however, raises the suspicion that the latter approach may involve knowledge of all properties down to the last particle.²¹ In his view, this is an absurd implication. I, however, will lay the groundwork here, to develop this account in a qualified fashion in the last chapter. Before doing so, I will still discuss one further interpretation of the essence claim.

The final version of revelation, discussed in that chapter, refers to knowledge of the 'counterfactual extensions of a phenomenal concept'. Knowing those extensions puts us in a position to eliminate all the accidental features of the phenomenal properties in question. This means, thanks to knowing the extensions of a phenomenal concept we can remove all properties that are not essential to the phenomenal. As I will show, however, this account fails. The reason is that the nature of phenomenal concepts is controversial. It is usually claimed that not the phenomenal is special, but rather the corresponding concepts. This, however, may be disputed.²²

In the fourth and final chapter, I will explain how my view of revelation can justify the privileged access to the phenomenal. I will claim that revelation primarily leads to ontological knowledge about the phenomenal. I will argue, however, that on this basis privileged self-knowledge about a particular phenomenal property can be justified.

As a first step, I will introduce my interpretation of revelation, which I will call *Q-me* revelation. I will show that the resulting ontological view, based on considerations about experience stemming from adverbialism, gives credence to my claims. Since adverbialism is controversial, I will show that my notion, called phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, can sidestep the basic problems of the former view. The conclusion of my ontological account is that phenomenal properties are composed of subjective and qualitative properties.

In a second step, I will show how *Q-me* revelation reveals phenomenal *Q-me*-ism. The main reason is that experiential properties can be interpreted in two different senses. On the one hand, those properties can form part of the experiencing subject. On the other hand, they can form part of the experience itself. The former view holds

²¹ See Damjanovic 2012.

²² See especially Chalmers 2007 for his 'master argument'.

that we have experiences, the latter that something is an experience.²³ Both interpretations of these experiential properties determine the ontology of experience and, therefore, the phenomenal. My claim in this chapter is that *Q-me* revelation reveals that both are the case. Since the experiencing subject and the representational qualities are revealed as part of the phenomenal, they can be integrated into one single account. This implies straightforwardly that an experience is exhausted by the phenomenal. The resulting ontology, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, accounts for that fact.

Apart from demonstrating that phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is a plausible ontology of experience, I will argue, in a third step, that *Q-me* revelation explains privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal. Primarily *Q-me* revelation reveals phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, i.e. an ontological account of the phenomenal, respectively experience, in general. Since *Q-me* is present as a concrete phenomenal property, e.g. *red-me*, and constitutes only *one* property, I claim that we can know this fact with certainty. By carefully dissecting *Q-me* revelation, in implicit and explicit *Q-me* revelation, I will show that both types of knowledge are possible.

In a final step, I will prove that *Q-me* revelation avoids the most dangerous pitfall of the general revelation thesis. I will show that my version, even though a strong account, is compatible with physicalism. Since strong versions of the revelation thesis need to reveal, to some extent, the physical structure of the phenomenal as well, I will argue that *Q-me* revelation clearly complies with this fact. To do so, I will employ the idea of embodiment²⁴ and show that this view reveals that *Q-me* is embodied. *Q-me* revelation is, therefore, not prone to anti-physicalism. It is only a further argument against mind/brain identity.

It is safe to conclude that if what I argue here is true, then important progress is in sight. We should have a solid justification to believe in the privileged access to the phenomenal/experience and a promising starting point for further research. Especially the investigation of introspection and phenomenal consciousness will profit from this result. But most importantly, my view justifies the Cartesian intuition that we can know certain things about our mind with certainty. Even though I do not believe that

²³ See Nida-Rümelin 2007a for this view.

²⁴ See e.g. See Gallagher 2000.

this grounds all knowledge, we regain a very important tool for the philosophy of mind.

I. SELF-KNOWLEDGE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACQUAINTANCE

I.1. Self-knowledge and accounts

The epistemological specialness of self-knowledge, as mentioned above, is captured by the idea of *privileged access*. According to Gertler this means the following: “Self-knowledge may be epistemically special in that (a) it is especially secure or *certain*; (b) one uses a unique method to determine one's own mental states.”²⁵ Of course both epistemologically special characteristics are not exclusive.

Let's start with (a). In the case of self-knowledge the epistemically strongest ideas are infallibility and omniscience. Gertler explains these claims the following way:

One is *infallible* about one's own mental states if, and only if, one cannot have a false belief to the effect that one is in a certain mental state. (In other words, one's belief that one is in a particular mental state entails that one is in that mental state.) One is *omniscience* about one's own states if, and only if, being in a mental state suffices for knowing that one is in that state. (In other words, one's being in a particular mental state entails that one knows that one is in that state).²⁶

It seems that these claims are particularly strong and therefore hardly anyone thinks this to be true nowadays.

Restricting those claims means basically limiting their scope. Not all beliefs about our own mental states are infallible or omniscience, only the ones formed by the special method of introspection. We could put the weaker thesis as follows: “When one carefully, attentively employs the mode of knowing unique to self-knowledge, one will not form a false belief about one's own states.”²⁷ This might be problematic for all

²⁵ Gertler 2011b, § 1.1.

²⁶ Gertler 2011a, p. 61-62.

²⁷ Gertler 2011b, § 1.1.1.

kinds of mental states, but at least for our current phenomenal states²⁸ or properties this seems to be true. Introspective acquaintance theorists for example explore this idea. Of course those claims can be weakened even further, but for our purposes this short characterization is sufficient.

Gertler also states another important idea. She says that “[...] infallibility and omniscience correlate the belief that *p* with *p* itself. But they are neutral between epistemic internalism and externalism.”²⁹ While versions of epistemic externalism speak about infallibility and omniscience as the highest degrees of epistemic security, the highest degree of epistemic security in epistemic internalist models is certainty. “The claim that one can be *certain* that one is in a particular mental state applies to a single self-attribution, whereas the reliability-based theses of infallibility and omniscience concern a person's general accuracy.”³⁰ Epistemic certainty is often tied to the idea of introspection as a special unique method of obtaining knowledge about our own mental states³¹. Still, there are stronger and weaker versions of both theories.

Now, let's turn to (b). When we talk about the unique epistemic method to grasp one's own mental states we talk about introspection. In this particular case, we talk about introspection from an epistemic point of view. So, what makes introspection so special? According to Gertler, “[o]ne standard answer to this question is that we have epistemic access to our states that is *direct*, whereas our access to facts or objects external to us is indirect.”³² This directness can come in two forms (at least according to acquaintance theorists):

In the first, epistemic sense, the claim is that we can grasp our own mental states without inference; we need not rely on reasoning from observation. The second sense of directness is metaphysical: there is no state or object that mediates between my self-attributing belief (that I am now thinking that

²⁸ 'Phenomenal states' is how Gertler puts it. I want to note that this is far from clear. If something phenomenal is realized as a state is controversial.

²⁹ Gertler 2011b, § 1.1.1.

³⁰ Gertler 2011a, p. 65.

³¹ Since I want to explore what we can know about the phenomenal, or better what is the privileged access to the phenomenal, I will assume certainty.

³² Gertler 2011a, p. 65.

it will rain, feeling thirsty, etc.) and its object (my thought that it will rain, my feeling of thirst).³³

Acquaintance theorists therefore defend (a) and (b), even though that does not mean that they maintain the strong infallibility and omniscience thesis. There is still margin of error, for example by using another method or because reflection about our own mental states fails.

This sort of interpretation is not only unique to acquaintance theorists. Inner sense theorists can also accept (a) and (b). According to Gertler, for those theorists introspection is similar to perception, but “[e]ven if introspection is similar to perception, our self-attributions may nonetheless be more secure than our other beliefs.”³⁴ This may be the case because we use certain abilities to obtain knowledge about a restricted class of mental states, namely our own, but they “[...] will deny that the difference between self-knowledge and other types of knowledge have deep philosophical significance.”³⁵

However, there is still another class of philosophers. Those would claim that “[...] we ascertain our own thoughts by looking *outwards*.”³⁶ This so called 'transparency principle' says “[...] that one looks ‘through’ the mental state, directly to the state of the world it represents.”³⁷ It becomes obvious, at this point, how important certain epistemic features are in constituting an account of self-knowledge.

There are different ways of arguing for the specialness of self-knowledge (some accounts are epistemic and some are non-epistemic). I will focus exclusively on standard epistemic accounts of self-knowledge.³⁸ Standard accounts include: the unmediated observation model (acquaintance model), the inner sense model and the

³³ Gertler 2011b, § 1.1.2.

³⁴ Gertler 2011a, p. 66.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁶ Gertler 2011b, § 1.1.2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, § 1.1.2.

³⁸ One epistemic non-introspective account is the rationality model. Proponents argue that self-knowledge is based on rationality rather than introspection. The account is closest to the later explained transparency model of introspection. The models basically differ in their explanation for justification. While the former is internalist, the latter is externalist. The biggest problem for the rationality account is its strong rationality condition. A problem like self-deception is hard to grasp for this account. In addition, requiring an excessive high degree of rationality makes the model trivial. An excessively strong rationality criteria leads to less need for justification of self-knowledge. See especially Gallois 1996 as a proponent. See Gertler 2011a and b for discussion.

transparency model.

The unmediated observation model – often attributed to Descartes – is most of the time based on what is called acquaintance. Such a model holds that there is a *direct* access to a given mental state; that means that there is no mediating state and the knowledge obtained is non-inferential. This involves therefore directness in two senses, an epistemic sense and a metaphysical sense. Such states are often described as self-presenting mental states. According to Gertler self-presenting properties imply certain psychological and epistemic characteristics:

Specifically, (i) no one who has a self-presenting property *directly* self-attributes its negation [...]; (ii) anyone who has a self-presenting property and considers whether she does, will self-attribute that property; and (iii) a direct attribution of a self-presenting property is *certain*, in the relative sense.³⁹

This is usually secured by the acquaintance principle, which states this kind of directness.

The inner sense model denies the specialness of self-knowledge. This model tries to construct introspection in analogy to perception. Gertler puts it the following way:

In contrast to the Unmediated Observation model, the connection between the introspective (scanning) state, and the introspected (scanned) state, is causal and contingent.⁴⁰

This analogy can be modeled in different ways, but the basic idea stays the same. In contemporary philosophy of mind a lot of the proponents of inner sense theory think that this model helps to solve the problem of consciousness. Therefore most of them defend the so-called HOP (higher-order perception) theory. According to this theory, what makes a mental state conscious is the fact that there is a higher order state attached to it. For proponents of the inner sense model this claim is basically a direct consequence of the model, since – if the inner sense theory is correct – conscious

³⁹ Gertler 2011b, § 2.1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, § 2.2.

states are grasped by an inner sense.

The transparency model portrays yet another approach to self-knowledge. In contrast to the other models just described it emphasizes the 'looking outward'. Self-knowledge is therefore only a form of perceptual knowledge, which can only be acquired by referring to non-mental objects.⁴¹ Not everyone agrees with this form of transparency. Consequently there are different versions of the transparency model. Some claim that self-knowledge is inferential (perceptual), while others do not. The more common claim by now is that “[o]ne's own beliefs are transparent to one in that one does not notice them as beliefs, but instead looks 'through' them directly to their objects.”⁴² This is basically exploiting the epistemic principle of transparency, which means: when I introspect on my own mental states, by transparency, I look 'through' the mental state to the object of the outward world.

So far we have seen what the basic criteria for privileged self-knowledge are and in what accounts they result. The crucial aspect behind the idea of privileged *access* is the epistemic position we are in. We are in position to know something with a special certainty or security. There are different ways of spelling out this position, but independent of whether someone chooses to be an epistemic externalist or an internalist about mental states, she relies on a view about what kind of epistemic features⁴³ she deploys. The resulting accounts of self-knowledge – most of them tied to introspection as unique method – are depending on those principles as well. The key issue in the debate about privileged self-knowledge lies therefore in an examination of the key epistemic features.

⁴¹ See Gertler 2011b.

⁴² Gertler 2011b, § 2.3.

⁴³ This is to say whether someone favors acquaintance, causality or transparency.

I.2. Knowledge about the phenomenal

In the debate about the mystery of Consciousness, conscious experiences play the key role. The so called hard problem⁴⁴ places the phenomenal properties of experiences in the focus of attention. Also I would argue they are the corner stone to privileged self-knowledge. We should ask therefore the following: what do we know about our experiences with certainty⁴⁵? This question is of course primarily an epistemic one but not exclusively. It is also about the ontological structure of experience. I do not want to imply that we are necessarily able to decide whether physicalism or any other metaphysical view is true, but we are capable to know some matters about the structure of experiences and I will argue that there is reason for the intuition that we know the phenomenal properties of our experiences with certainty or that we have *privileged access* to them.

As a first step, it seems wise to have an initial characterization of phenomenal properties at hand. Since I do not want to endorse any metaphysical claims at this point, I will identify *phenomenal properties* with an intuitive Nagelian account⁴⁶:

There is something that it is like for someone to have an experience.

As a second step, we should take a closer look at the most important intuitions about epistemic features related to phenomenal properties. Here is a list of those features⁴⁷:

- 1) Acquaintance: knowledge about phenomenal properties is not merely inferential, it is direct and unmediated.
- 2) Asymmetric epistemology: phenomenal knowledge is direct, while knowledge about the world is mediated.

⁴⁴ See Chalmers 1995 for discussion.

⁴⁵ Not all philosophers allow for certainty. See especially Unger 1975.

⁴⁶ For detailed discussion of this account see Nagel 1974.

⁴⁷ Inspired by Balog 2009. For an extensive list of semantic epistemic features see *ibid.*

- 3) Infallibility or incorrigibility: Our knowledge about our phenomenal properties cannot be false and no one else can correct us.
- 4) Transparency (weak): When we turn our attention to conscious perceptual experiences the features perceived are those of the object.
- 5) Transparency (strong): When we turn our attention to conscious perceptual experiences the features perceived are *only* those of the object.
- 6) Experience thesis: knowledge about phenomenal properties can only be acquired by having the relevant experience.
- 7) Fineness of grain: phenomenal properties are extremely fine in grain.

Closely connected to these features are intuitions about metaphysical knowledge of phenomenal properties. Those intuitions are usually seen as the most controversial issues in the consciousness debate. Any epistemic theory in philosophy of mind should at least be prepared to have an answer to them.

- 8) Zombies⁴⁸: The conceivability of a zombie scenario cannot be ruled out *a priori*.
- 9) The explanatory gap⁴⁹: There is a principle gap between physical descriptions of a person's experience and a phenomenal description of that experience. This gap is supposed to be unbridgeable.
- 10) The knowledge argument⁵⁰: Even if we have all physical information, e.g. about colors, when we experience colors for the first time, we learn something new and therefore not all information is physical.⁵¹

This list is far from complete⁵². It represents however the spirit of the Materialist – Anti-materialist discussion. Such metaphysical conclusions are of secondary

⁴⁸ For detailed discussion see Chalmers 1996, 2002.

⁴⁹ See Levine 2001.

⁵⁰ See Jackson 1982.

⁵¹ In part inspired by Balog 2009.

⁵² Further arguments and intuitions can be found e.g. in Kripke 1980, Nagel 1974, White 2007 and Nida-Rümelin 2007a.

importance in my discussion of the *privileged access* to the phenomenal, however, I want to stress that the consequence of proposing a thesis about it has almost direct influences on that debate.

As we have seen in 2) and 3) *privileged access* for phenomenal properties is assumed. Now, 1) is a relational explanation for this access; 4) is a feature to determine the content of a perceptual experience; 5) is the representationalist explanation of phenomenal properties; 6) states the difference between knowledge about phenomenal properties and knowledge about statements; and 7) states that phenomenal properties outstrip our conceptual apparatus in the sense that even if we learn a concept at a particular time t , we are not able to reapply this concept at t' .

These epistemic features of phenomenal properties are very close to what has been said about self-knowledge so far. The only difference is that no intuition seems to point to a higher-order theory. There seems to be no contingent knowledge relation involved. This however follows directly from our intuitions. It is assumed that we have *privileged access* to our phenomenal features. We will see that, in the end, even a theory that claims that there is no special epistemic relation to the mental has its merits. First, we will turn to acquaintance and transparency. Both features have a decisive influence on the epistemology and ontology of phenomenal properties.

I.3. Acquaintance and transparency

The importance of acquaintance and transparency lies in their explanatory and constitutive claims. The other epistemic features, however, simply name characteristics of phenomenal properties. This means, 2) and 3) state the fact that we are supposed to have *privileged access* to the phenomenal; 6) is the condition under which we can form knowledge of phenomenal properties; and finally 7) states that, like other qualities, phenomenal qualities are extremely fine in grain.

Now, what exactly do these decisive features bring to the table? The short answer for transparency, on the one hand, is that – depending on whether one subscribes to the weak or the strong version – this feature ontologically restricts the

constitution of conscious experiences and therefore the scope of the phenomenal. On the other hand, acquaintance determines the special epistemic relation we are in when obtaining knowledge of phenomenal properties. Both features are obviously not incompatible, but as we will see there are different interpretations.

I.3.1. Transparency

For knowledge about the phenomenal the epistemic position we are in is crucial. However, transparency will have influence on whether acquaintance even makes sense, and if so, how to develop the respective model. It is important to keep in mind that if transparency is true – and our intuitions arguably suggest that it is – then, at least, part of the knowledge of experience is dependent on objects of the outer world, and, in my opinion, therefore cannot count as privileged in the traditional sense.

To get a better understanding, let us have a look at what we are talking about here. Transparency⁵³ was famously presented by G. E. Moore in his article 'The Refutation of Idealism' (1903).⁵⁴ This feature is not necessarily exclusive to self-knowledge or introspection, it is rather often applied to perception – just as Moore suggested. According to transparency, introspecting a conscious experience leads to the conclusion that we are not aware of the conscious features of our experiences. Rather we are aware of the features of the objects – which do not depend on our consciousness itself – those experiences are about. To put it in Moore's words:

[...] the moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see what, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation blue, all we can see is the blue: the

⁵³ I will only talk about transparency of experience here and not about transparency of belief. This is due to the fact that I am examining experiences and not beliefs.

⁵⁴ I take Moore's original thesis to be an excellent example for a weaker version of transparency. We will see, at the end, of the illustration why.

other element is as if it were diaphanous.⁵⁵

He also tries to show that this does not mean that consciousness does not exist, rather that there is a unique relation to the mind-independent object. For Moore, this relation can be described as in any other case of 'knowing'. He writes:

To have in your mind 'knowledge' of blue is *not* to have in your mind a 'thing' or 'image' of which blue is the content. To be aware of the sensation of blue is not to be aware of a mental image – of a “thing,” of which 'blue' and some other elements are constituent parts in the same sense in which blue and glass are constituents of blue bead. It is to be aware of an awareness of blue; awareness being used, in both cases, in exactly the same sense.⁵⁶

Even though Moore's theory about consciousness is highly controversial – to say the least – transparency seems to be true. Modern versions normally assume two basic claims:

- (1) When we introspect we are aware of mind-independent objects of experience.
- (2) When we introspect there is no awareness of intrinsic features of experience.⁵⁷

Moore himself argues for transparency in the context of refuting idealism. What he basically argues against is the idea idealists hold. He thinks, “[i]dealists [...] must assert that whatever is experienced, is *necessarily* so. And this doctrine they commonly express by saying that 'the object of experience is inconceivable apart from the subject.'”⁵⁸ This theory however is self-contradictory. According to Moore, philosophy of necessary truths is analytic and this disqualifies self-contradictory propositions, but the idealist theory leads to the following contradiction: “(1) Experience *is* something unique and different from anything else; (2) Experience of

⁵⁵ Moore 1903, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁷ These claims are taken from Crane 2014.

⁵⁸ Moore 1903, p. 10.

green is entirely indistinguishable from green; two positions which cannot be true.”⁵⁹ Even though he grants that some Idealists do not insist on the identity of an experience of a certain object and the object, he still claims that according to Idealists they form an 'organic unity'⁶⁰. Moore does not want to allow such a unity, since “[w]hatever is experienced *must* be experienced”⁶¹ is a self-contradictory claim. For Moore the consequence after analyzing sensations is that, on one hand, there is a common element, namely consciousness; on the other hand the object of consciousness is where the difference lies. The conclusions he draws from this, is that a) sensations have a common element and a distinctive element and b) that consciousness and its objects have to be separated.

What follows, for Moore, is the question whether both elements exist and he answers positively. He interprets the object of consciousness as “content” which stands in relation with consciousness to form a mental fact.⁶² This relation is special. It is a relation of “[...] 'knowing' or 'being aware of' or 'experiencing' something.”⁶³ Moore believes that the reason why other philosophers have not seen this distinction is because consciousness is diaphanous. At this point, he admits that it even might be true that awareness itself is e.g. blue or red, but that this simple is not the crucial fact introspection shows.

The conclusion is that, what Moore calls “content”, is actually the object of the sensation. The argument shows that there are objects in the world, which are mind-independent and therefore I am aware of those independent objects. On the contrary to Idealism, Moore makes the following claim:

I am as directly aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own sensations, and *what* I am aware of with regard to each is exactly the same – namely that in one case the material thing, and in the other case my sensation does

⁵⁹ Moore 1903, p. 12.

⁶⁰ See Moore 1903.

⁶¹ Moore 1903, p. 14.

⁶² This is only Moore's conclusion. For further discussion on “content” see Moore 1903.

⁶³ Moore 1903, p. 21.

really exist.⁶⁴

In my opinion, Moore clearly supports weak transparency. It is doubtful whether he would subscribe to the stronger thesis. This leaves plenty of room for the uniqueness of consciousness.

Certainly Moore's thesis had its impact on the history of philosophy of mind⁶⁵, but it was not until Gilbert Harman⁶⁶ that it reached its full potential. Harman picked up the argument and implemented it in the contemporary debate. His version of the structure of experience and the relation to the objective world are the corner stone to representational theories of the mind.⁶⁷ Analyzing an experience of seeing a red, ripe tomato Harman concludes the following:

When you think about visual representation, it is very important to distinguish (A) qualities that the experience represents the environment as having from (B) qualities of experience by virtue of which it serves as a representation of the environment. When you see a ripe tomato your visual experience represents something as red. The redness is represented as a feature of the tomato, not a feature of your experience.⁶⁸

But he goes further. He does not only conclude that the feature red is represented as being in the world, it is also that you cannot know whether or not your experience has an intrinsic quality of redness. Since you cannot consciously access those qualities you cannot know anything about them and therefore introspection fails. Due to this fact one can only obtain the concept of red in the world. Harman makes the distinction between properties of the object of experience and properties of the experience of an object⁶⁹ explicit. He also denies explicitly the conscious access to the latter, making phenomenal qualities nothing other than representational qualities. This version of the

⁶⁴ Moore 1903, pp. 25-26.

⁶⁵ See e.g. Broad 2009, Ryle 1949 and Grice 1961.

⁶⁶ See Harman 1990, 1996.

⁶⁷ Harman's version is an example for a strong interpretation of transparency.

⁶⁸ Harman 1996, p. 8.

⁶⁹ See Harman 1990.

view still has numerous supporters⁷⁰ and critics⁷¹.

Early critics include philosophers like Broad⁷², who acknowledges the transparency of conscious experiences, but interprets the consequences differently. While Moore insists on the existence of mind-independent objects and sees no evidence that introspection tells us much about consciousness itself, Broad is inclined to argue that the second part of Moore's statement is not true. He has two arguments in favor of his claim.

The first argument is based on an analysis of the relation between the constituents. To do so, Broad starts with the distinction between introspection and inspection and argues that transparency theorists seem to mingle these two different acts. A transparency theorist, he argues, seems to deny that when introspecting e.g. pain that I can really grasp experiencing the pain. Instead the proponent seems to claim that all I can apprehend or inspect is only the pain itself. Broad, however, thinks that the introspection relation is essentially different. He argues:

If there is such a [...] situation it must presumably consist of at least two constituents, related in a certain specific way by an asymmetrical relation so that one of these constituents occupies a special position (viz., that of *objective* constituent) and the other occupies a characteristically different position (viz., that of *subjective* constituent).⁷³

He assumes now that if we are introspectively acquainted to the whole sensation, it is clear that the relation between the two constituents is not obviously presented to us like the two constituents. To explain this Broad gives the following analogy:

When I look at a pattern composed of three dots, A, B, and C, arranged in that order on a line, I know intuitively that B is between A and C. But I do not “see” the relation of “between” in the sense in which I “see” the dots; though it would be quite in accordance with the usage to say that “I see *that* B is

⁷⁰ See e.g. Tye 1995, 2000, 2009a; Martin 2002 and Byrne 2001.

⁷¹ See e.g. Block 1990, 1995; Nida-Rümelin 2007b, 2008 and Stoljar 2004.

⁷² See Broad 2009.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

between A and C".⁷⁴

What he wants to show is that no one assumes that, even though "seeing" only the dots, that they are not in a "between" relation to each other which I can know directly and non-inferentially. So, someone using this argument against introspective knowledge of sensations is demanding something introspection can never fulfill. The relation of the two constituents of sensations is known to us directly and non-inferentially, just as the relation "between". He goes on that if we want to know further characteristics of the constituents, we have to *inspect* them. From this position however no conclusion can be drawn about the whole sensation. It seems, however, that we know about the structure of sensation when we introspect them.⁷⁵

The second argument Broad employs is that inspecting is not enough for introspection. For the sake of argument he assumes that it is really like the transparency theorist says: when we introspect our sensations there is nothing more presented to us than the object of that particular sensation. So there is no direct and non-inferential knowledge of something more. To show that this seems implausible, Broad asks us to distinguish between two constituents of an experience. The first element is sensed and available for selection. The second component, however, may only be sensed and is not available for inspection. If this is true, then introspection would only point to the object of the sensation, since it is the constituent which is inspected. Broad thinks that this is a mistake because the second constituent is still felt or sensed. This leads him to believe that we can know, with certainty, that what we are inspecting is not the whole sensation and this means that introspecting a sensation is more than inspecting the sensations object.⁷⁶

Almost as a response to Harman's proposal, Block introduces his famous and improved version of an inverted spectrum argument⁷⁷. The argument is primarily intended to defend qualia realism and refute functionalism, but it also denies the intuition that one cannot introspect the intrinsic qualities of our experiences. According to Block, Harman's representationalism stipulates "[...] that in experience

⁷⁴ Broad 2009, p. 309.

⁷⁵ See Broad 2009.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*

⁷⁷ See Block 1990, 1996, 2001.

we only are aware of properties of what is represented, not the vehicle of representation.”⁷⁸ Block's first reaction is that this is simple false because Harman's view of introspection is wrong. To show this, he applies intuitions about the inverted spectrum. A second problem is that Harman does not distinguish between *awareness* and *attention*. Finally, a third issue is that Harman does not consider the possibility that there are phenomenal properties of our experiences that do not represent anything.⁷⁹

The first question is whether we can know something introspectively about the phenomenal properties of our experiences. Block thinks that Harman's argumentation is the wrong way around. The idea behind it is that we should agree that is better to “[e]licit simple intuitions about complex cases rather than complex intuitions about simple cases.”⁸⁰ For Block, just looking at a red tomato and consequently answering the theoretical question of the existence of intrinsic qualities of experiences, on the basis of introspection alone, is not acceptable. He thinks that his version of the inverted spectrum argument clearly shows that intentional content and qualitative content are independent of each other and that this will settle the issue of “whether there are intrinsic mental features of our experience.”⁸¹⁸²

Block's second argument draws attention to the fact that Harman does not distinguish between *awareness* and *attention*. Harman claims that when we try to introspect our perceptual experience all we can *attend* to is the represented quality of the object in world. In the case of the red tomato – when introspecting the features of that experience – we can only *attend* to the redness of the tomato and not to the qualitative character of our experience. Block argues the following against this view:

Harman relies on the diaphanousness of perception (Moore, 1922), which may be defined as the claim that the effect of concentrating on experience is simply to attend to and be aware of what the experience is of. As a point about attention

⁷⁸ Block 1996, p. 26.

⁷⁹ See Block 1996.

⁸⁰ Block 1990, p. 73.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁸² See also Shoemaker 1994a, b for further discussion.

in one familiar circumstance — e.g., looking at a red tomato, this is certainly right. The more one concentrates on the experience, the more one attends to the redness of the tomato itself. But attention and awareness are distinct, and as a point about awareness, the diaphanousness claim is both straightforwardly wrong and misleading. One can be aware of what one is not attending to. For example, one might be involved in intense conversation while a jackhammer outside causes one to raise one's voice without ever noticing or attending to the noise until someone comments on it — at which time one realizes that one was aware of it all along. Or consider the familiar experience of noticing that the refrigerator compressor has gone off and that one was aware of it for some time, even though one didn't attend to it until it stopped.⁸³

This means, according to Block, when Harman talks about attention he seems to propose an appropriate account. However, this picture does not tell us anything about awareness. According to Block, this is the mistake.

The third and final issue concerns the problem of whether all phenomenal properties are representational. Block advocates for two possibilities. On the one hand, phenomenal properties represent — e.g. in the red tomato case. On the other hand, the same phenomenal properties do not represent anything — e.g. in the case of an orgasm. The former is known as mental paint and the latter as mental latex.⁸⁴ This way of constructing representational features, is different from Harman's way. Block distinguishes the following three attributes of experiences:

1. The intentional content of an experience. I am currently looking at a tomato and my experience represents the tomato as red.
2. Mental properties of the experience that represent the

⁸³ Block 2003, pp. 171-172.

⁸⁴ See Block 1996 for further discussion.

redness of the tomato. This is mental paint. According to me, the phenomenal character of the experience is such a mental property: it represents the tomato as red. According to me, one can have introspective access to this phenomenal character. Harman denies both claims.

3. Mental properties of the experience that don't represent anything. This is mental latex. I don't know whether there are any such properties in the case of a normal experience of a red tomato, but I do claim that such properties are involved in orgasm-experience.⁸⁵

Block believes that we have introspective access to mental paint. Harman denies this on the basis of his representationalist account. Block tries to show what the consequences of this view are. Imagine a hallucination, where no intentional objects exist. A veridical perception of a red tomato and a hallucination of a red tomato have at least two commonalities. First, both are introspectable and second, both should refer to the intentional content. Block, however, thinks that this is not what the representationalist claims. In his view, Harman insists that we are aware of the intentional object and not the intentional content. In the light of this idea, it seems, however, difficult for Harman to explain his position. Even though Harman does not appeal to the intentional content, Block insists that if he were, he had to admit that introspection would lead to awareness of some mental properties.⁸⁶ However, Block does not even agree with that view. He is a phenomenal realist and thinks that “[t]he conception according to which the content of experience is the same as the content of believe sounds even stranger when we think of what makes the two experiences experientially similar.”⁸⁷ For him there is a difference between qualitative content and intentional content and that is what the inverted spectrum argument shows. Mental latex offers a story for possible experiences that do not attend to the intentional content. All they attend to is the qualitative content.

Apart from Block's arguments, there is another convincing reason why, at least,

⁸⁵ Block 1996, p. 29.

⁸⁶ This is according to Block a view that is hold by Lycan.

⁸⁷ Block 1996, p. 30.

strong transparency is false. Those who argue in this line⁸⁸ claim that the transparency theorist depends on a perceptual view of introspection. Transparency of experience, in the strong sense, depends on the assumption of a perceptual model of introspection from the start. To put it in Nida-Rümelin's words:

[...] [an] analysis of various formulations of the transparency claim already suggest[s] that these claims follow from the undeniable phenomenological insights associated with the term 'transparency' only under false presuppositions. [...] [It is] quite plausible that these false presuppositions are somehow linked to the misleading perceptual model of phenomenal awareness and of phenomenological reflection.⁸⁹

The way the argument works is that it makes explicit how the transparency theorist is hiding this implicit assumption and tries to show, on these grounds, what is claimed. It can be cashed out in different ways. According to Nida-Rümelin, one way is “[...] to show that the criticized reasoning implicitly uses certain assumptions that (a) are natural if one's thought is guided by the bad metaphor I called the perceptual model or if the opponent is interpreted along the lines of that metaphor and that (b) these assumptions are not otherwise justified.”⁹⁰

Another way is to show that there is a mistake in steps. Stoljar argues that strong transparency claims the following steps in reasoning:

Look at a tree and try to turn your attention to intrinsic features of your visual experience. I predict you will find that the only features there to turn your attention to will be features of the presented tree.

[...][to:]

In introspection, one is or becomes aware of the intrinsic features of one's experience *by* attending to the objects and properties represented by that experience.

⁸⁸ See Nida-Rümelin 2007b and Stoljar 2004.

⁸⁹ Nida-Rümelin 2007b, p. 445.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 453.

[...][to:]

In introspection, one is not *directly* aware of the intrinsic features of one's experience.⁹¹

This, however, can be doubted in two manners. Stoljar thinks that in general a qualia realist has to deny this reasoning and suggests the following two possibilities: a) analyze the direct awareness; or b) investigate the meaning of awareness.⁹²

Still today, the debate between proponent and opponent continues. It is a debate about whether phenomenal properties are something more than simple representational properties and therefore about the question if they form part of the representational content or not. If strong transparency is true, the consequence is that there is no *privileged access* to those phenomenal properties, meaning no epistemic special relation to them, or that there is a special relation to a bunch of different kinds of properties⁹³. At this point, one should be able to see how transparency strongly influences the overall acquaintance relation to the phenomenal. One might think, like Moore, that there is not necessarily an incompatibility, but be suspicious about the access to consciousness⁹⁴. Still, one can follow Broad, who believes that the essential relation to the whole of our experiences – via introspection – is more than only inspecting and therefore opens the door for some form of acquaintance. Even further, one can deny, like Harman, that we have *privileged access* to our phenomenal properties, whether or not acquaintance is true or not⁹⁵. Also, one can ask, like Block, whether or not experiences always represent or whether there is a difference between awareness and attention. And finally, one can accuse the transparency theorist of assuming an implausible perceptual model of introspection. With this discussion in mind, I will now focus on acquaintance.

⁹¹ Stoljar 2004, p. 356.

⁹² See Stoljar 2004.

⁹³ I am not trying to say that all perceptual knowledge would be special. One, however, can assume that, at least, other qualitative properties should have the same kind of epistemic specialness.

⁹⁴ In other words one subscribes at least to weak transparency and suspects strong transparency.

⁹⁵ There are however more sophisticated versions of representationalism which admit the possibility of strong transparency and a kind of *privileged access* to phenomenal properties via acquaintance. If I understand Tye correctly, he seems to adopt such a position. For detailed discussion see Tye 2009b.

I.3.2. Acquaintance

In analytic philosophy, acquaintance was famously endorsed by Bertrand Russell. In his book *'The problems of Philosophy'*⁹⁶, he distinguishes knowledge by *acquaintance* from knowledge by *description*. For Russell “[...] knowledge by *acquaintance*, is essentially simpler than any knowledge of truths, and logically independent of knowledge of truths [...]”, whereas “[k]nowledge of things by *description*, on the contrary, always involves [...] some knowledge of truths as its source and ground.”⁹⁷ For Russell knowledge by *acquaintance* constitutes an infallible knowledge and allows for no margin of error. Following Fumerton's interpretation, “[k]nowledge by acquaintance [...] involves a relation between a subject and some entity or feature of the world that is either a truth *maker*, or a constituent of a truth maker.”⁹⁸ To clarify this idea Fumerton introduces the example of pain. One can have knowledge by acquaintance with the feeling of pain, but pain itself is neither true nor false. Fumerton writes:

Knowledge of truths, in contrast to knowledge by acquaintance, is then characterized in such a way that it always involves the application of concepts. That, in turn, is sometimes supposed to introduce the possibility of error, a kind of error that knowledge by acquaintance cannot encounter because that knowledge does not involve characterizing or conceptualizing (describing) the objects with which we are acquainted.⁹⁹

Russell never provided an elaborated analysis of what knowledge by acquaintance is. However, he did give a characterization:

We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process

⁹⁶ See Russell 1967.

⁹⁷ Russell 1967, p. 25.

⁹⁸ Fumerton 2008, § 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, § 1.

of inference or any knowledge of truths.¹⁰⁰

Not giving a detailed account is of course problematic, but at least Russell provides basic instructions on how his approach might work. According to Gertler, Russell claims that if you want “[t]o determine whether you are acquainted with an object [...] you should consider whether you can doubt the object's existence. If you cannot, your awareness of the object is direct; you are therefore acquainted with the object.”¹⁰¹ At this point, one can already see that acquaintance is a somewhat hazy concept or explanation. It does not result in a 'deep inside' about the special epistemic relation, it rather gives a name to an intuition.

The original scope of the Russellian theory of acquaintance is much broader than contemporary versions. Russell thinks that “[a]ll our knowledge, both knowledge of things and knowledge of truths, rests upon acquaintance as its foundation.”¹⁰² Apart from introspected or perceived sense-data¹⁰³ or mind-dependent appearances, he considers memories of those appearances and maybe even the self as adequate candidates for knowledge by acquaintance. To those particular things Russell himself also adds *universals*. Nowadays, most contemporary philosophers think that the original scope is too broad. They would agree, however, that the best candidate is introspective self-knowledge about the phenomenal properties of one's conscious experiences.¹⁰⁴ This is often called the unmediated observation or acquaintance model of introspective self-knowledge. Needless to say, that this model – and therefore the restricted account of acquaintance – is controversial. While Russell was concerned about the foundation of knowledge, contemporary proponents are rather engaged in showing that this kind of knowledge is *direct*.

General attributes of acquaintance, however, imply the following claims: epistemological and metaphysical *directness*. In Gertler's view¹⁰⁵ epistemological directness means that the resulting knowledge is non-inferential and depends for its justification solely on awareness. According to her, metaphysical directness refers to

¹⁰⁰ Russell 1967, p. 25.

¹⁰¹ Gertler 2012a, p. 95.

¹⁰² Russell 1967, p. 26.

¹⁰³ For detailed discussion see Huemer 2011.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Chalmers 2003, 2010; Fumerton 1995, 2005 and Gertler 2001, 2012a.

¹⁰⁵ See Gertler 2012a.

the idea that there is no mediating state or process present when accessing the object of awareness. She concludes that three elements of Russell's approach are fundamental to any theory involving acquaintance. The first idea states that an introspective judgment is directly – in the metaphysical not simple causal sense – tied to its truthmaker. This means that an experience is somehow *directly* involved in the judgment's content. For Gertler, this implies the following:

Any judgment that is directly tied to its truthmaker will be true.

But this fact carries no immediate epistemic implications. After all, any judgment causally tied to its truthmaker will also be true, though such judgments sometimes fall short of knowledge.¹⁰⁶

This claim is about metaphysical directness only. There is yet no epistemic directness involved.

According to Gertler, the second constituent claims epistemic directness. It states that some introspective judgments are justified simply by the subject's conscious state at the time of the judgment. This implies that an object is “[...] *immediately present to consciousness*, where such presence is an epistemic matter.”¹⁰⁷ This means that acquaintance depends epistemically only on criteria available in immediate consciousness. Gertler explains that this is the reason why knowledge by acquaintance usually targets mental objects and why external objects epistemically rely on criteria external to consciousness.

The third and last element is about the epistemic security of knowledge by acquaintance. According to Gertler some introspective judgments have stronger justifications than empirical judgments. The reason is that empirical judgments are either not directly tied to their truthmakers or depend on criteria, external to the subject's conscious state at the time of the judgment. This means that any knowledge relying on the first two requirements – knowledge by acquaintance – is epistemically more secure than any other kind of knowledge. Defending this idea does not commit the acquaintance theorist to certainty; it only requires a special epistemic status.

¹⁰⁶ Gertler 2012a, p. 97.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Acquaintance is often seen as ambitious epistemic thesis and therefore rejected by numerous philosophers. One main criticism is based on the non-analyzability of acquaintance. The argument was most famously defended by Wilfrid Sellars¹⁰⁸. Sellars argues that the so called “given” is a myth ('The myth of the given'). This also includes foundationalist views about knowledge like Russell's theory of acquaintance. The basic problem, according to Sellars, is that classical foundationalist knowledge is based on “non-inferential knowledge of facts”¹⁰⁹. What is sensed however are *particulars*. This leads Sellars to conclude the following:

For what is *known* even in non-inferential knowledge is, is *facts* rather than particulars, items of the form *something's being thus-and-so* or *something's standing in a certain relation to something else*. It would seem, then, that the sensing of sense contents *cannot* constitute knowledge, inferential or non-inferential;¹¹⁰

This basically means that imagining some fundamental relation or acquaintance with facts or particulars, will not lead to knowledge of truths.

According to Ali & Fumerton the more general problem for the acquaintance relation is that in more sophisticated views “[...] acquaintance is only a *constituent* of the ground of propositional knowledge.”¹¹¹ As a consequence, this idea is, in those theories, not analyzable but simple and not definable.¹¹² Therefore, “[...] acquaintance is not *by itself* an epistemic relation.”¹¹³ Since a definition of acquaintance is not possible, one can at least try to characterize it. Fumerton's attempt is based on an example about pain. Imagine you are in pain and have a conversation with someone. This conversation is so interesting that you forget that you are in pain. And when the conversation is over you realize you return to feeling you are in pain. There are two possible interpretations. One is that the pain stopped during the conversation and returned afterwards. The other is that the pain was always there but you were not

¹⁰⁸ See Sellars 1963.

¹⁰⁹ Sellars 1963, p. 128.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹¹¹ Ali & Fumerton 2014, § 7.1.

¹¹² See Ali & Fumerton 2014.

¹¹³ Fumerton 1995, p. 75.

aware of it. Assuming that the latter is true, awareness constitutes the relation to pain.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the acquaintance theorist will “[...] argue that analysis requires conceptual “atoms” - simple ideas out of which other ideas are built.”¹¹⁵ This strategy, even though highly controversial, may lead to a solution. The solution however depends on whether or not one thinks that she understands acquaintance in the first place.

The second famous criticism is the so called 'problem of the speckled hen'. It was first suggested by Gilbert Ryle to A. J. Ayer.¹¹⁶ It was later discussed in detail by Roderick Chisholm¹¹⁷. The problem can be stated as follows: one is presented with an appearance¹¹⁸ of a speckled hen, a hen with 48 speckles. Supposedly that person is acquainted with the appearance. The question is whether one is justified in judging that the appearance contains 48 speckles rather than 47 speckles. If direct acquaintance with the truthmaker cannot provide sufficient non-inferential justification for one's believe, Russell's theory might be at stake. Ayer already anticipated an answer. His solution was that when we sense a certain appearance, “[...] then, if the sense-data [appearance] do not appear to be enumerable, they really are not enumerable.”¹¹⁹ According to Chisholm however, this solution is flawed. Chisholm thinks that Ayer's proposal has two interpretations. He says:

First, we might interpret him to mean the law of excluded middle does not apply to the given, e.g., that it is neither true nor false to say that the datum has forty-eight speckles. [...] [Second] [h]e may be intending to say that, although the datum does not comprise *many* speckles, there is no *definite* number of them; and further that, although there are assuredly more than three, four, or five, there is no answer to the question, *how many more*.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ For the example see Fumerton 2008.

¹¹⁵ Fumerton 2008, § 2.

¹¹⁶ See Ayer 1969.

¹¹⁷ See Chisholm 1942.

¹¹⁸ Classically the problem was discussed in the context of the sense-data debate.

¹¹⁹ Ayer 1969, p. 124.

¹²⁰ Chisholm 1942, p. 369.

The first interpretation is quite problematic. The reason is that this might be true for 48 speckles but not for two or three, and the solution therefore seems *ad hoc*. The second interpretation basically states that it is not true or false that the appearance has 48 speckles; it claims that it is false. Chisholm proposes therefore the following similar solution:

It is well known that indistinguishability, as applied to sense-data, is a non-transitive relation. That is to say, it is possible to find three sense-data such that, with respect, say, to hue, the first is indistinguishable from the second, and the second from the third, while the first can be distinguished from the third.¹²¹

He further suggests that by thinking about identity, we usually assume a transitive relation. Chisholm concludes that “[...] in order to know that A and B are identical with respect to hue, it is not sufficient to know that they are indistinguishable (or match) with respect to hue.”¹²² Saying that A and B are identical means, for Chisholm, that C¹²³ must be excluded, since a basic judgment is not due to the fact that it involves more than the compared two data. His solution for the 'problem of the speckled hen' therefore suggests that “[...] the possibility that the proposition, which expresses one's estimate of the number of speckles, is not epistemologically basic, but, like judgments of qualitative identity, refers beyond the given presentation.”¹²⁴ The idea behind this solution is that basic propositions are imprecise. This is the classical answer to the most popular conclusion of the argument. This so-called argument from *Indeterminacy*¹²⁵ is traditionally connected to the existence of sense-data. The foundationalist can, according to Fumerton, easily avoid the problem of the speckled hen. He writes:

If sensation, like belief, really were a kind of intentional state then I'm not sure how the problem of the speckled hen even arises for the foundationalist who claims noninferential

¹²¹ Chisholm 1942, p. 371.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 371.

¹²³ In the example, C is indistinguishable from A and B.

¹²⁴ Chisholm 1942, p. 371.

¹²⁵ See Huemer 2011.

knowledge of appearance grounded in acquaintance with that appearance.¹²⁶

The reason behind it is that one can believe that the hen has many speckles without believing that it contains a determinate number of speckles.

In a newer version of the argument, Sosa¹²⁷ evaluates the speckled hen independently of sense-data. He characterizes the foundationalist approach – via acquaintance – as a problem of awareness. Recall, knowledge by acquaintance means that when we are acquainted with something we are *directly* aware of it. Sosa points out that there are two different kinds of awareness. The first kind is a sort of noticing awareness, characterized by believing something about a present object or fact. The second kind is experiential awareness. In this case, one becomes aware of an experience simply by undergoing it.¹²⁸ He thinks that the distinction between noticing, or n-awareness, and experiencing, or e-awareness, makes an important difference for the foundationalist view of knowledge. He writes:

From the fact that one is e-aware of something it does not follow that one is n-aware of it. To notice a fact about one's experience at a given time is to believe correctly that is so, but just a guess will not do: the correct belief must also be at a minimum justified, or reasonable, or epistemically appropriate, or some such thing.¹²⁹

As we have seen, acquaintance theorists appeal to direct awareness of things and n-awareness cannot explain this directness. According to Sosa, “[...] the concept of “noticing” is itself epistemic in a way that unsuits it for explanatory work that it is asked to do.”¹³⁰ Directness requires a non-inferential, foundational explanation because its role is to ground the epistemic status of certain beliefs. The only way this can be done is to rely on e-awareness. At this point, the 'problem of the speckled hen' arises because there seems to be a gap between e-awareness and n-awareness. Since

¹²⁶ Fumerton 2005, p. 127.

¹²⁷ See Bonjour & Sosa 2003 and Sosa 2003.

¹²⁸ See Bonjour & Sosa 2003.

¹²⁹ Bonjour & Sosa 2003, p. 120.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

the character of an experience is not always noticed or might even be characterized falsely, the question is how one is able to decide whether the experience contains 48 speckles rather than 47. According to Sosa, the foundationalist needs to spell out “[...] *which* sorts of features of our states of consciousness are the effective ones, the ones *by corresponding to which specifically* do our basic beliefs acquire epistemically foundational status.”¹³¹ 48 speckles do not seem to be a good candidate, three on the other hand might. Sosa continues to claim that, as a foundationalist, one might think that the ‘given’ are *indexical concepts* and *phenomenal concepts*. Indexical concepts are very basic concepts which can be described as “[o]ne’s believing that *this* is *thus*.”¹³² Such a concept however is not sufficient for having a perceptual concept. The prior lacks the recognitional aspect. That is where phenomenal concepts come into play. They are characterized as some sort of “[...] sensitivity, when appropriately situated, to the presence or absence of the feature.”¹³³ According to Sosa, these ‘thicker’ perceptual and the thin indexical concepts have a certain reliability guaranteed since they hardly depend on flawed application conditions. He thinks that problems only arise when moving beyond these concepts. Applying simple geometric and arithmetical (SGA) concepts for example, one can already easily be mistaken. Sosa describes the problem as follows:

Classical foundationalists need some such beliefs with arithmetical and geometrical content, since from purely indexical or phenomenal concepts very little could be inferred, even allowing some explanatory induction from the given to the external.¹³⁴

How then, based on a sensory experience, does one explain the outside world? Sosa thinks that the foundationalist cannot provide us with an answer. Since acquaintance with conscious experiences, by itself, fails, one needs to appeal “to some causal or counterfactual connection between the character of the experience and the

¹³¹ Bonjour & Sosa 2003, p. 121.

¹³² Sosa 2003, p. 280.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

propositional content of the judgment.”¹³⁵

The acquaintance theorist is however left with options. One solution she can exploit is, according to Poston, that Sosa's argument assumes the correspondence between the experience of an object and the related belief in consciousness. Following Bonjour's reply to Sosa¹³⁶, Poston thinks that “[t]he subject lacks [...] an initial acquaintance with the correspondence between the belief and the experience.”¹³⁷ Even if true, it is however difficult, for the foundationalist, not to defend this correspondence – both, Fumerton and Bonjour seem to think so.

Another way of defusing Sosa's worry is to follow two arguments due to Feldman. The first is to focus on the distinction between two types of concepts. Sosa assumes that there are indexical and phenomenal concepts, even though some do not. Feldman¹³⁸ however insists that exactly the difference in concept explains why most people are not able to distinguish 48-speckles from 47-speckles. The key is the phenomenal concept. In general Feldman follows Sosa thoughts about phenomenal concepts. According to Fumerton, Feldman's characterization of a phenomenal concept is the following:

[A phenomenal concept] [...] allows one to categorize an experience as being of a certain kind, where the justified application of the concept involves nothing other than one's awareness of the relevant phenomenal character of the experience.¹³⁹

To answer Sosa's problem about the difference between 3-speckles experiences as foundationally grounded and 48-speckles as not, Feldman employs a distinction made by Sosa himself. Both think that having a phenomenal concept of a certain property means that one is sensitive to the presence or absence of that property. Feldman, on the contrary to Sosa, however concludes that, even if true, knowledge about that property is not implied. The idea behind it is that some sort of

¹³⁵ Sosa 2003, p. 289.

¹³⁶ See Bonjour & Sosa 2003.

¹³⁷ Poston 2007, p. 339.

¹³⁸ See Feldman 2003.

¹³⁹ Fumerton 2005, p. 130.

sensitivity does not necessarily mount to knowledge of a certain property. That means one can lack the phenomenal concept of forty-eight or the phenomenal concept of being speckled.

Feldman thinks that since phenomenal concepts are primitive, not a lot follows. For us there is no difference between forty-eight speckled images and forty-nine speckled images. When we believe that we experience a 48-speckled image, Feldman argues, we employ a different kind of 48-speckled concept. This kind of concept is what Sosa calls the SGA concept. This is “[...] the complex concept constructed out of the simpler concepts of “forty-eight” and “being speckled”.”¹⁴⁰ The case of three-speckles is similar. Feldman thinks that there is a distinction between a primitive phenomenal concept and the complex SGA concept, in this situation however we can grasp both concepts. Based on this concept distinction Feldman argues that foundational justification is restricted to indexical and phenomenal concepts only. The foundationalist therefore does not have to argue for foundationally justified SGA concepts as well.

Feldman's second argument refers to Sosa's distinction between e-awareness and n-awareness. According to Sosa, e-awareness is something passive. It is only concerned with the presence of certain properties of one's experience. N-awareness on the other hand, “[...] involves justified true beliefs about their presence.”¹⁴¹ Feldman thinks however that this may not be true. In a story about the red light of his telephone, he states that when somebody calls and nobody attends, a right light blinks on the side of the telephone. Since this state of the art telephone system does not always lead to the ringing of the phone, and Feldman is sometimes working hard, he will only notice¹⁴² the red light at some later point in time. However, he realizes that he is aware of the light in a way in periphery of his visual field, but does not notice it at the time. That means, he was only peripherally aware of the red quality and therefore did not notice it.¹⁴³ Feldman concludes that Sosa overlooked a different kind of experience. He characterizes it as follows:

¹⁴⁰ Feldman 2003, p. 213.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁴² 'Notice' here, is Sosa's interpretation.

¹⁴³ For the example see Feldman 2003.

[...] [It is] something that involves more than mere experiential awareness but less than, or at any rate different from, noticing as he's described it. We can *attend to* features of experience. We can focus on them.¹⁴⁴

This form of *attending to* properties of experience is different from Sosa's n-awareness. A belief about a quality can also be caused because someone points out the quality. But usually one *attends to* the quality and this causes the belief. According to Feldman this Form of attention is not intentional, but spontaneous. The foundationalist is now in a position to argue that if one cannot attend to the phenomenal properties, one cannot form the corresponding phenomenal concepts. So, if one cannot generate the phenomenal concept of being forty-eight-speckled, one cannot attend to this property of one's experience. Feldman concludes, therefore, that there are properties present in e-awareness that are not epistemically relevant. We, however, only attend to the epistemically relevant properties.¹⁴⁵

A further argument against the 'problem of the speckled hen' is given by Fumerton. It suggests that there is a distinction in the nature of properties. Fumerton suggests:

[...] [W]e can make a distinction between perfectly determinate properties and the many determinable properties that supervene upon those determinate properties.¹⁴⁶

For clarification he refers to a color example. A bright shade of cherry red can be described as cherry red, red, dark-colored and colored. In an important sense, 'the nature of properties' is phenomenological.¹⁴⁷ Fumerton therefore concludes:

On the sense-datum theory, we are directly acquainted with the datum's exemplifying the property of being many speckled. On the appearing theory, we are directly acquainted with our being appeared to many-speckled-ly. We are not, however, directly acquainted with the datum's containing exactly 48

¹⁴⁴ Feldman 2003, p. 216.

¹⁴⁵ See Feldman 2003.

¹⁴⁶ Fumerton 2005, p. 134.

¹⁴⁷ For the example and further argumentation see Fumerton 2005.

speckles, nor are we acquainted with our being appeared to 48-speckled-ly. It is not that the more determinate properties aren't exemplified – it's just that we are not directly aware of them.¹⁴⁸

He thinks this is due to evolution. It seems advantageous to be able to keep a certain level of generality and escape a world of hyper fine grained property exemplification.

Apart from these classical solutions to the 'problem of the speckled hen', there are other conclusions to be drawn from the argument. A short overview, according to Fantl and Howell¹⁴⁹, includes imaging alteration, eliminativism and introspective fallibilism. Imaging alteration states the following:

Images are not stable and they can change in subtle ways. Thus, the image one contemplates upon closing one's eyes and introspecting may not be the same one as when one is confronted with the picture of the hen. What's more, the image might change as one is counting the phenomenal spots.¹⁵⁰

This view was defended, for example by Franck Jackson¹⁵¹.

Eliminativism advocates for the following picture:

There is nothing there to be introspected. If there were an image in one's head, that image must have a determinate number of phenomenal spots, and given the strong epistemic access associated with such images, one must be able to have a highly justified belief about the image. One cannot have such a justified belief because of the accidental nature of any correct belief about the hen, so there must not be such images.¹⁵²

This is a fairly radical option which e.g. Armstrong¹⁵³ defended.

Introspective Fallibilism claims that "[t]here is a spotted hen image, with a

¹⁴⁸ Fumerton 2005, p. 135.

¹⁴⁹ See Fantl & Howell 2003.

¹⁵⁰ Fantl & Howell 2003, p. 377.

¹⁵¹ See Jackson 1977.

¹⁵² Fantl & Howell 2003, p. 376.

¹⁵³ See Armstrong 1971.

determinate number of spots, but epistemic access to one's images is not so strong as to guarantee an accurate report with respect to all facets of the image."¹⁵⁴ This is the view Fantl and Howell prefer. Gertler picks up the argument and follows the conclusion. She thinks that the speckled hen argument does not have to concern knowledge by acquaintance, "[...] since the acquaintance theorist (a proponent of the acquaintance approach) need not claim that every experience is introspectible [...]"¹⁵⁵

The 'problem of the speckled hen' is a challenging argument against foundationalist epistemology and cannot be defused so easily. In philosophy of mind, acquaintance theorists do not necessarily try to lay the foundations for knowledge in general, their approaches are usually weaker. Since the problem concerns primarily appearances or sense-data, implications for phenomenal properties are manageable but not deniable. A strong transparency theorist might invoke the argument. For her, phenomenal properties are nothing other than representational properties. They form part of the experience's representational content. Since one might not be able to distinguish whether the experience represents 48 or 49 speckles, one also might be wrong about its phenomenal properties and therefore does not possess knowledge by acquaintance.

This, however, is not entirely true. It depends on how one interprets knowledge by acquaintance. As mentioned above, Russell believes that knowledge by acquaintance is essentially simpler than knowledge by description and, on the contrary to it, logically independent of knowledge of truths. Whether or not Russell's test¹⁵⁶ is sufficient prove for the existence of this relation is questionable, but for him, acquaintance is the foundation for knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. Following this interpretation, the transparency theorist should deny acquaintance and claim that the 'problem of the speckled hen' succeeds.

One can certainly interpret the situation differently. Assuming that acquaintance is not the foundation for knowledge in general, but just another type of

¹⁵⁴ Fantl and Howell 2003, p. 377.

¹⁵⁵ Gertler 2012a, p. 103.

¹⁵⁶ If we cannot doubt the object's existence, you are directly aware of it and therefore acquainted with it. See also footnote 105.

knowledge¹⁵⁷, the strong transparency theorist does not have to deny the existence of acquaintance.¹⁵⁸ Even in this theory, acquaintance is in big part the motivation for the experience thesis (6) above. What is denied is that acquaintance is the foundation for all knowledge. For propositional knowledge, according to this interpretation, it is sufficient to have a description of the relevant experience. To know something in a direct sense or by acquaintance, one needs a type of familiarity, that is to say, one needs to undergo that experience and be directly aware of it.¹⁵⁹ The strong transparency theorist however claims that knowledge by acquaintance does not affect propositional knowledge. Only propositional knowledge is knowledge of facts and truths, therefore acquaintance, also existing, does not add anything essential.

Both moves force the acquaintance theorist to an answer. To block the success of the first move, the best thing she can do – as seen above – is to deny the overall representational character of phenomenal properties.¹⁶⁰ To block the second, she may insist that to form propositional knowledge, knowledge by acquaintance is already required.¹⁶¹

For Gertler¹⁶², there are a variety of further challenges to the acquaintance approach of self-knowledge. She argues that one first argument against this approach follows directly from the perceptual account of introspection or the inner sense model. The basic idea of this model is that introspection works essentially like perception. This means that the relation between the scanning state and the scanned state is causal and contingent.¹⁶³

Another problem, according to Gertler, is that the acquaintance intuition might be wrong. Schwitzgebel, for example, argues that how we form knowledge about our experiences depends to a large extent on considerations about the world.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁷ This means, it is one more type of knowledge apart from propositional knowledge (or knowing that) and abilities (or knowing how). This idea is due to Conee 1994. It is designed to defeat Jackson's knowledge argument.

¹⁵⁸ See e.g. Tye 2009b for support.

¹⁵⁹ For detailed discussion see e.g. Conee 1994 and Nida-Rümelin 2010.

¹⁶⁰ See e.g. Block 1996, Gertler 2012a and Nida-Rümelin 2007a.

¹⁶¹ That is in a sense Russell's thesis. For discussion see also Nida-Rümelin 2010.

¹⁶² See Gertler 2012a.

¹⁶³ See e.g. Sellars 1963, Armstrong 1963 and Goldman 2006.

¹⁶⁴ See Schwitzgebel 2012.

A third objection insists that even if introspective self-knowledge is especially epistemically secure, conscious states do not provide sufficient justification for self-knowledge. According to Gertler especially defenders of epistemic externalism claim that part of “[...] justification or warrant [...] consist in certain regularities.”¹⁶⁵ Conscious states do not consist in such regularities and therefore acquaintance “[...] implies that justification does not always consist in such regularities.”¹⁶⁶ Acquaintance theorists rather rely on the idea that dispositional properties of the subject are not necessary to justify self-knowledge. This, however, seems to undermine the fact that phenomenal concepts partly depend on recognitional dispositions.¹⁶⁷

A last objection, according to Gertler, is the anti-physicalist concern many opponents raise. Physicalists should therefore not engage in introspective self-knowledge by acquaintance.¹⁶⁸ Anti-physicalist philosophers, however, defend that knowledge by acquaintance is the accurate approach for knowing one's own phenomenal properties.¹⁶⁹

I.4. Knowledge of phenomenal properties: acquaintance and transparency

As stated so far, phenomenal properties are often considered to be the best candidate for *privileged access*. This is due to intuitions we have about those properties. Apart from intuitions about enabling conditions and other characteristics, the two determinable factors are the transparency thesis and the acquaintance thesis. The former intuition has great influence on the composition of an experience and therefore on the constitution of its phenomenal properties. The latter specifies the special epistemic and metaphysical directness relation we have with those properties. By having a closer look at both theses, it became clearer, what they try to explain and where the problems lie. So far, however, I have not been specific enough how this influences our knowledge of phenomenal properties. To start this quest, it seems to be

¹⁶⁵ Gertler 2012a, p. 101.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁶⁷ See Bonjour & Sosa 2003.

¹⁶⁸ See e.g. Levine 2007 for discussion.

¹⁶⁹ See e.g. Chalmers 2003, 2010; Gertler 2001, 2012a and Nida-Rümelin 2007a.

reasonable to investigate what acquaintance accomplishes to explain about the knowledge we obtain from the phenomenal and if the results are compatible with the transparency intuition.

Now, we have seen that whether or not the 'problem of the speckled hen' even concerns the acquaintance relation with phenomenal properties depends on certain considerations. The consequences, even if the argument can be applied, are manageable. It seems therefore that in this case the acquaintance theorist does not have to fear the issue raised. There are however the remaining worries to consider. Is introspection essentially like perception? Does knowledge about phenomenal properties depend to a large extent on considerations about the outside world? Do conscious states provide sufficient justification for self-knowledge? And, does acquaintance lead to anti-physicalism?

We can argue back and forth whether we should prefer introspection to be like perception or even, whether the strong transparency model¹⁷⁰ is true or not. Most theories that do not rely on acquaintance cannot explain the intuition of an epistemically substantial *privileged access*. I believe in the *privileged access* to the phenomenal and acquaintance provides the best explanation so far.

Also, I agree that considerations about the outside world play an important role, especially when we entertain perceptual experiences. I however think that their importance lies in considerations about the objects and context of experience, not the nature of their phenomenology. Especially regarding personal feelings, like love, it seems implausible that the outside world tells me something about its phenomenal constitution.

Further, I think that it is true that conscious states do not justify, with epistemic certainty, recognitional phenomenal concepts¹⁷¹. However, phenomenal concepts do not have to be construed as recognitional concepts; they can also consist in e.g. demonstrative concepts¹⁷². In the latter case, conscious states clearly can justify knowledge with certainty. The reason is that justification here is not based on

¹⁷⁰ Nida-Rümelin 2007b and Stoljar 2004 argue that transparency implies the perceptual model of introspection. Whether or not this is the case does not matter for my discussion.

¹⁷¹ Most famously discussed in Loar 1990, 1997.

¹⁷² For discussion see e.g. Perry 2001.

regularities, but rather on the particular, phenomenal conscious fact.

The real problem for the acquaintance theorist, I believe, lies in the compatibility with physicalism. Levine, while introducing his materialist constraint, writes the following:

[...] Materialist Constraint: [...] no appeal [can] be made in the explanation to any mental property or relation that is basic. [...] Acquaintance itself is not given a materialist explanation, but appealing to it, let us say, removes the mystery of the gap with respect to phenomenal properties. [...] [However,] it does the materialist no good to explain away the gap by violating her own doctrine – that is, by admitting into her ontology a mental relation that is basic. Thus, in our examination of the various proposals, it will be crucial to note that violation of the Materialist Constraint immediately disqualifies a proposal because it ceases to be a *materialist* explanation of the gap.¹⁷³

The Materialist Constraint basically states that theories can only count as a form of physicalism if they do not entail primitive mental properties or relations. Acquaintance is represented by the latter. According to Levine, the acquaintance theorist does not necessarily violate the idea that phenomenal properties are physical, but she claims a relation that is basic and cannot be reduced to physical relations.¹⁷⁴ Even though Levine expresses doubts about such a possibility, I think he raises a fundamental problem. The issue seems to be related similar ideas. As seen above, Sellars is convinced that an acquaintance relation cannot lead to knowledge of truths.¹⁷⁵ Ali & Fumerton state that acquaintance may only be one component of justification for propositional knowledge. Such a relation is not analyzable and has to be taken as simple.¹⁷⁶ Fumerton concludes, therefore, that the acquaintance relation by itself may not be an epistemic feature.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Levine 2007, p. 150.

¹⁷⁴ For further discussion see Levine 2007.

¹⁷⁵ See Sellars 1963.

¹⁷⁶ See Ali & Fumerton 2014.

¹⁷⁷ See Fumerton 1995.

Now, assuming that acquaintance is an epistemic feature and acquaintance leads to knowledge, where does this fundamental criticism come from? I think the answer can be found in intuition itself. In the list of epistemic features related to phenomenal properties we find the following:

- 2) Asymmetric epistemology: phenomenal knowledge is direct, while knowledge about the world is mediated.
- 3) Infallibility or incorrigibility: Our knowledge about our phenomenal properties cannot be false and no one else can correct us.

This is more or less the intuition that we have *privileged access* to our phenomenal properties. Epistemology however does not work that way, and an intuition is not enough. There needs to be an explanation, especially when one is convinced that in a particular case knowledge is epistemic secure or certain. At first glance, acquaintance seems to ground 2) and 3) smoothly by claiming:

- 1) Acquaintance: knowledge about phenomenal properties is not merely inferential, it is direct and unmediated.

So, acquaintance explains this kind of knowledge by claiming an epistemic relation that secures privileged knowledge. However, this relation is absolutely mysterious. In the case of phenomenal properties, it is, as Levine thinks, a primitive relation and it seems to me *ad hoc* at best. Furthermore, unless one believes that it is the bases of all knowledge, just as Russell intended, it is difficult to see when exactly this special relation appears. We can only follow Russell's guideline: if one cannot doubt the existence of an object, one is directly aware of the object, and therefore acquainted with it. There is, however, little agreement on what can be doubted and what not in the history of philosophy alone¹⁷⁸. We might want to ask for something more tangible, therefore.

As I pointed out in the previous paragraph, simply presenting acquaintance to maintain the intuition that we have privileged knowledge of our phenomenal properties seems mysterious and incompatible with physicalism. What options does the acquaintance theorist have? Let us leave compatibility with physicalism aside for a

¹⁷⁸ We just have to consider the debate between Descartes and his opponents.

moment. I will get back to the issue, after explaining what move is left open to the acquaintance theorist to enlighten this profoundly basic and mysterious relation. Without discussing a special thesis, the key element contemporary acquaintance theorists defend is that in some judgments about current, conscious experiences, phenomenal reality overlaps with the apprehension of this reality.¹⁷⁹

The important question concerns when exactly this is the case. To achieve this task, one needs conditions that instantiate the acquaintance relation. Those conditions, according to Gertler, are the following:

Acquaintance Approach: Some introspective knowledge consists
in judgments that

1. are directly tied to their truthmakers;
2. depend, for their justification, only on the subject's conscious states at the time of the judgment; and
3. are more strongly justified than any empirical judgments that do not meet conditions (1) and (2).¹⁸⁰

To meet condition 1) and tie the judgment directly to its truthmaker, the acquaintance theorist has to limit the scope of knowledge about phenomenal properties. This is due to considerations about epistemic and phenomenal appearances. Since, according to one argument¹⁸¹, introspective judgments are not about phenomenal, but epistemic appearances those judgments are not tied directly to their truthmakers. Gertler thinks that, while this might be true, the acquaintance theorist has to maintain that in *some* circumstances both forms of appearances converge. Also, according to this argument¹⁸², one has to keep in mind that background knowledge can alter epistemic appearances. Therefore the acquaintance theorist has to be even more careful about claims of convergence. A key issue for knowledge by acquaintance, according to Gertler, is to secure this convergence.

¹⁷⁹ Proponents of such an account include Bonjour & Sosa 2003, Chalmers 2003, 2010; Feldman 2004, Fumerton 1995, 2005; Gertler 2001, 2012a; Horgan & Kriegel 2007 and Nida-Rümelin 2007a. For detailed and extensive discussion see especially Gertler 2012a.

¹⁸⁰ Gertler 2012a, p. 99.

¹⁸¹ See Schwitzgebel 2008.

¹⁸² See Gertler 2012a.

Gertler describes a practical strategy that achieves its success “[b]y adopting a scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude towards one’s own experiences [...]”¹⁸³ To make the two appearances converge both appearances, one restricts the epistemic appearances so much that they are entirely depending on the phenomenal reality. This leads to the result asked for by the acquaintance theorist. On the one hand, those appearances shape how objects seem to a subject. On the other hand, since they are directly determined by phenomenal reality, they are directly tied to their truthmaker.

Concerning conditions 2) and 3) about the justification of those epistemically special judgments, Gertler proposes that 2) can be justified in two ways. In a demanding reading¹⁸⁴ of acquaintance, higher-order awareness solves the problem. The solution presupposes that “one must be aware that the experience (of which one is aware) bears the truthmaking relation to the judgment (of which one is also aware).”¹⁸⁵ Further, one needs to have higher-order awareness of the first-order awareness to justify the acquaintance relation in the first place. On a less demanding reading¹⁸⁶ however, the second step does not apply. It is enough to argue that solely conscious awareness of an experience is appropriate to justify knowledge by acquaintance of a phenomenal property.

The demanding reading of acquaintance already includes more than condition 3) requires. Gertler argues therefore for a less demanding way. She spells out the presuppositions involved to meet condition 3) the following manner:

- The judgment’s justification is immune from certain defeaters to which the justification for empirical judgments that do not meet (1) and (2) is vulnerable; and
- The judgment’s justification is not vulnerable to any defeaters from which the justification for empirical judgments that do not meet (1) and (2) is immune.¹⁸⁷

This basically means that knowledge by acquaintance is immune to defeaters about the

¹⁸³ Gertler 2012a, p. 110.

¹⁸⁴ See e.g. Bonjour & Sosa 2003.

¹⁸⁵ Gertler 2012a, p. 113.

¹⁸⁶ See e.g. Feldman 2006.

¹⁸⁷ Gertler 2012a, p. 114.

causation of the experience. Whether or not a mad scientist caused a sensation has no impact on the knowledge about the phenomenal properties of that experience. In the case of perceptual knowledge however, the causal relation – whether or not a mad scientist caused a sensation – can defeat the justification. The justification of judgments obtained by acquaintance is therefore stronger than in perceptual cases.

Now, it is entirely unclear to me how this strategy is supposed to dissolve the claim that acquaintance seems mysterious. Gertler states that usually the line of attack against acquaintance with phenomenal properties is to deny the core thesis in this form. Leaving aside arguments that suppose that acquaintance conducs to the impossibility of communicating phenomenal concepts¹⁸⁸, one problem for the theory is that it leads only to insubstantial demonstrative reference. This means, direct demonstrative judgments about the phenomenal reality do not represent any substantial epistemic grasp of this reality.¹⁸⁹ According to Gertler, this stems from a special view about phenomenal concepts. As explained above, this view maintains that we need to have recognitional dispositions¹⁹⁰ to apply the concept. I, on the one hand, maintain that this argument is already on shaky grounds since our intuitions about phenomenal properties tell us that they are extremely fine-grained. Gertler, on the other hand, argues the following:

[...] the acquaintance theorist can do justice to the intuition that one who possesses a phenomenal concept (who grasps a phenomenal property) will have certain dispositions, while maintaining that this grasp consists in conscious states. For she can claim that conscious states explain these dispositions. (One way to do this is to say that a pain grounds the disposition to recognize pains; that is, the conscious state is the categorical basis of this disposition).¹⁹¹

This however does not solve the problem for the acquaintance theorist, namely that

¹⁸⁸ See Lewis 1990 and Stalnaker 2008. For a detailed defense of acquaintance against this argument see Gertler 2012a.

¹⁸⁹ See Gertler 2012a.

¹⁹⁰ See e.g. Sosa 2003.

¹⁹¹ Gertler 2012a, p. 119.

this relation is amazingly mysterious. On my view, one should analyze what is said in conditions 1-3). Again, one has to keep in mind why we allegedly need acquaintance: it is because of the intuition that we have *privileged access* to our phenomenal properties, and that needs explanation.

Condition 1) states that judgments about our phenomenal properties are directly tied to their truthmaker. The strategy to accomplish this however, is just as obscure as the one introduced by Russell himself. In a practical manner, by entertaining a scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude, one is supposed to obtain the proclaimed result, namely converging phenomenal and epistemic appearances. In the end of this process, the epistemic appearances are solely depending on the phenomenal reality, therefore assuring the direct relation to that reality. Even though noble in thought, it seems very doubtful how this can be of help to accommodate the condition. Being as careful as one may be, how does one know that she fully converged both appearances? Or, to state it differently, how does someone know in practice – and theory – that such a convergence is possible? Unless the directness condition is already assumed, one does not undertake the practical task to converge the two appearances. This act, based on a scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude, is supposed to show that the directness condition can be met. We do not have to go so far and assume some form of circularity here, but we cannot call that an explanation either. To be perfectly clear, I think that what happens is the following. We have the intuition that we have *privileged access* to our phenomenal properties, so we claim an asymmetric epistemology with a directness relation to those properties. This directness relation we call acquaintance. To achieve knowledge by acquaintance we claim one of the above stated strategies. So, we come from intuitions about our ongoing phenomenology, claim acquaintance and practically investigate our phenomenology to show that what we said from the start is true and explained. I think that true or not in this case, is nothing more than the choice to believe one's own intuition. The acquaintance explanation is nothing more than restating that intuition. Therefore, it seems to me that acquaintance cannot explain the intuited privileged access.

This is, however, not enough to show that acquaintance is not true. By itself,

condition 1) is somehow just a restatement of our intuition of an asymmetric epistemology. Now, if conditions 2) and 3) can justify this intuition then maybe acquaintance is saved after all. I, however, do not find this to be a promising endeavor. Let me start with condition 3). I think that there is no problem with this statement. All it says is that if some kind of knowledge is special, then it is better justified than any empirical knowledge. In my opinion, this means, if there is privileged self-knowledge which meets condition a,b,c, etc., then it also has some superior form of justification, i.e. it does not fall prey to the same defeaters as our empirical knowledge. Again, this seems nothing more than restating our intuition. Privileged access does not only depend on the direct access intuition, but also on the intuition of epistemic security or certainty. Condition 3) therefore only reclaims some form of justification that we ask from the beginning. Condition 2) therefore seems the most promising candidate to demystify the acquaintance relation. Before exploring this possibility, let me get back to condition 1) for a moment. As we will see this is important for the discussion of condition 2).

As I have argued so far, condition 1) and 3) are only restating intuitions about phenomenal epistemology. This is especially true for 3). In the very beginning of the first section, *privileged access* to some mental state was defined as being (a) epistemically secure/certain; and (b) employing a special method.¹⁹² Condition 3) therefore corresponds clearly to (a). It might weaken the original statement by claiming only stronger justification, but that does not change the underlying intention. Now, condition 1) however does not directly correspond to (b). While (b) states that there is a unique method, namely introspection, 1) claims that to obtain introspective knowledge, the involved judgments are directly tied to their truthmaker. So 1) seems to be an explanation for (b) after all and therefore the acquaintance relation for introspection as a unique method. But is this really what happens? According to the argument above, the directness condition, or acquaintance, explains why introspection is epistemologically special. To obtain this direct tie to the truthmaker, however, we use an introspective scrupulously cautious doxastic attitude. We do not have to go so far to claim a vicious circle, but we cannot call this an explanation either. To state the

¹⁹² See Gertler 2011b.

acquaintance relation as an explanation – and not a mystery – for the *privileged access* the acquaintance theorist, I think, can therefore drop her suspicious practical investigation to converge phenomenal and epistemic appearance. To maintain this convergence – and therefore the direct tie of the introspective judgment to its truthmaker – she has to find a solution which grounds the acquaintance relation in a different way.

A possible solution might be included in condition 2). In Gertler's interpretation, this requirement has only justificational purposes for introspective judgments. I think however that it is the acquaintance theorist's best option to explain the acquaintance relation. The condition states that the justification of privileged introspective knowledge depends only on the subject's conscious state. This means, if I form a judgment about an ongoing red experience for example, for that judgment to count as privileged introspective knowledge, it will depend only on the current red experience in itself for justification. In part, the condition is used to setup the epistemically better justification in condition 3). It draws its power from the special epistemic situation that one can justify an introspective judgment only by the current conscious experience. Assuming the weaker interpretation of acquaintance, the reason is that only conscious experiences are appropriate to fulfill this task. In my opinion, there are basically two main lines¹⁹³ that one could follow to explain how conscious experiences manage that function. One line is to follow strong transparency. Since we are talking about knowledge of phenomenal properties, this ontology suggests that they form part of the experience's representational content. In this case, conscious experience justifies a judgment via its representational content. This is to say that the introspective phenomenal judgment about an ongoing red experience depends on the experience's representational content red. Since the representational content however depends entirely on the experience's object, the phenomenal judgment does as well. Even though this is a viable theory, the acquaintance theorist should resist it. The problem is that phenomenal judgments according to this view may depend solely on current conscious experiences, while the phenomenal properties of those experiences however depend on the experience's objects. So, justification of those judgments also

¹⁹³ I am not arguing, here, that there are only two possible positions. I think that, to make my point, it is sufficient to assume the two extremes of the spectrum. For other possibilities see e.g. Tye 2009b.

depends on the experience's object. According to many proponents¹⁹⁴ of strong transparency the qualities or properties of those objects are representational in character and therefore determined externally.

A second possibility for the acquaintance theorist is to deny strong transparency and insist that this is not the right kind of ontology. In this case, phenomenal properties do not simply form part of the representational content of experiences.¹⁹⁵ Without discussing possible ontologies¹⁹⁶ in detail, acquaintance, here, will only depend on phenomenal properties or phenomenal reality. Since the phenomenal properties have independent ontological status, judgments about those properties will only depend on them. I think at this point, another important door has opened for the acquaintance theorist. It seems to me that one can avoid the dubious strategies for condition 1). If one can argue – via the weaker interpretation of acquaintance – that only conscious experiences are capable to justify judgments about phenomenal properties, one should also be able to argue that, because of their ontological status, phenomenal properties of experiences – as truthmaker – are tied directly to those judgments. This seems to me an appropriate and elegant solution for the acquaintance theorist. First, the acquaintance relation seems no longer be mysterious and second, all that is needed to explain this epistemic specialness are conscious experiences. Therefore, condition 2) may solve acquaintance as a substantial and appropriate explanation.

Such a view however comes with a trade-off. Until now, I left acquaintance's compatibility problem with physicalism aside, only to bring it back with greater force. To explain the epistemic special acquaintance relation, it seems that one is tied to an ontological status for phenomenal properties. They have to be basic properties in the Levineian sense. So, either acquaintance is mysterious and basic, or it depends on mysterious and basic phenomenal properties. To see the problem, let us remember Levine's Material Constraint again: “[...] no appeal [can] be made in the explanation to

¹⁹⁴ See e.g. Byrne 2001, Harman 1990, 1996; Martin 2002 and Tye 1995, 2000, 2009a. For detailed discussion see especially Jackson 2006.

¹⁹⁵ See e.g. Block 1990, 1996, 2001; Chalmers 1996, Nida-Rümelin 2007b, 2008; Shoemaker 1994a, b and Stoljar 2004.

¹⁹⁶ For extensive discussion see Chalmers 2003.

any mental property or relation that is basic.”¹⁹⁷ Unless, the acquaintance theorist can demystify both – the acquaintance relation and phenomenal properties – she always runs into a problem with physicalism. It is my opinion that, without an answer to this issue, acquaintance cannot be seen as an appropriate explanation for the *privileged access*. In the remainder of this section, I want to explore further what possibility the acquaintance theorist has, to solve this problem.

What comes to mind is something similar to the solution for Jackson's famous knowledge argument¹⁹⁸. Now, the knowledge argument claims that physicalism has to be wrong. Based on the intuition of Mary the color scientist, Jackson claims the following:

Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black and white room via a black and white television monitor. She specialises in the neurophysiology of vision and acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky, and use terms like 'red', 'blue', and so on. She discovers, for example, just which wavelength combinations from the sky stimulate the retina, and exactly how this produces via the central nervous system the contraction of the vocal chords and expulsion of air from the lungs that results in the uttering of the sentence 'The sky is blue'. (It can hardly be denied that it is in principle possible to obtain all this physical information from black and white television, otherwise the Open University would of necessity need to use colour television.) What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a colour television monitor? Will she learn anything or not? It seems just obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it. But then it is inescapable that her

¹⁹⁷ Levine 2007, p. 150.

¹⁹⁸ For the original version see Jackson 1982.

previous knowledge was incomplete. But she had all the physical information. Ergo there is more to have than that, and Physicalism is false.¹⁹⁹

The argument comes in two versions²⁰⁰, a stronger and a weaker version. Since this issue does not affect my argumentation, I will not discuss this distinction here and maintain the original, stronger conclusion that physicalism is false. The argument therefore can be formulated as follows:

- 1) Before her release Mary, the color scientist, acquires all physical information about color vision.
- 2) When released, Mary learns something new about color vision, namely about our visual experiences.

Therefore:

- 3) There is some other information that is not physical information and physicalism is false.²⁰¹

The new information about color experiences Mary learns is often interpreted as information about phenomenal properties or as Jackson calls it “[...] raw feels, phenomenal features or qualia.”²⁰² For my purposes, phenomenal properties will do. For my case, the interesting consequence of this argument is that one physicalist reaction is to deny that Mary acquires new factual or propositional knowledge, but knowledge by acquaintance.

Conee²⁰³ introduced this approach, insisting that, apart from propositional knowledge and knowing-how²⁰⁴, knowledge by acquaintance constitutes a third, equally important, type of knowledge. Conee's characterization follows the one of the acquaintance theorist closely. To obtain this kind of knowledge the subject has to be in a maximal direct relation with its experience. The strategy Conee chooses is to agree

¹⁹⁹ Jackson 1982, p. 130.

²⁰⁰ For extensive discussion see Nida-Rümelin 2010.

²⁰¹ For a related structural analysis see Nida-Rümelin 2010.

²⁰² Jackson 1982, p. 130.

²⁰³ See Conee 1994.

²⁰⁴ Introducing knowing-how is a further strategy to dismantle the knowledge argument. The strategy was famously defended by Lewis 1990 and Nemirow 1990. The distinction between knowing that and knowing how is due to Ryle 1949. For contemporary discussion see e.g. Lihoreau 2008.

with Jackson's intuition that Mary – before being released – knows only some abstract facts, but lacks lively experiences. After leaving the black and white room she learns about a new property of her color experiences. While Jackson thinks that this is due to new information and therefore a new fact about experiences, Conee claims that knowing properties is becoming acquainted with them. Conee states:

A person is ignorant of a property when the property is unfamiliar to the person. In order to be ignorant of a property, it suffices to lack acquaintance with the property. To come to know a property is to become acquainted with the property, just as to come to know a city is to become acquainted with the city, and to come to know a problem is to become acquainted with the problem.²⁰⁵

This means for Mary that when she learns what the experience is like for her, she becomes acquainted with the experience. Conee's version concedes similar restrictions as other contemporary acquaintance theories do in general. It restricts acquaintance only to ongoing conscious experiences. His approach may therefore be exactly what the acquaintance theorist wants. The only further issue that has to be solved is the following: is this approach compatible with physicalism? And Conee answers positively. The idea behind this claim is that knowledge of facts does not include knowledge by acquaintance. Conee puts it the following way:

[One objection against this acquaintance thesis] [...] depends on the assumption that when someone has a familiarity with phenomenal qualities that is acquired by knowing all of the facts about the qualities, the person is acquainted with those qualities. The acquaintance hypothesis that we are considering denies this. The view has it that someone becomes acquainted with a phenomenal quality only by noticing the quality in experience. Knowing every fact about phenomenal qualities does not imply experiencing them, and thus on the present

²⁰⁵ Conee 1994, p. 140.

account it does not imply being acquainted with them.²⁰⁶

Knowing phenomenal properties by acquaintance is therefore knowledge in its own right and cannot be reduced to any other type of knowledge. Since it is neither the basis for knowledge of facts nor knowing-how, it does not violate physicalism. This means, assuming that phenomenal properties are physical properties, a subject can know all those physical facts without being acquainted to those facts. Therefore, Mary could have known all the facts about the phenomenal properties of a given color experience – before released –; she simply was not acquainted with those properties. Only after her release she becomes acquainted with those properties, without learning a new fact about them. Solving the compatibility problem with physicalism, this approach seems to be a viable solution for the acquaintance theorist. Or is it?²⁰⁷

Whether or not the acquaintance theorist can accept this solution also depends on her willingness to accept its implications. A contemporary theory of acquaintance with phenomenal properties, according to Gertler, aims for a convergence of phenomenal and epistemic appearances. To manage the task, it claims that the above discussed three conditions can be applied. 1) states the directness relation, 2) the solely dependence on current conscious experiences for justification and 3) the epistemic supremacy of this justification. As argued earlier, the best option for the acquaintance theorist to obtain the wanted result is to depend on the specialness of ongoing conscious states, not only in the epistemic sense, but the metaphysical sense as well. The reason I gave is that an acquaintance relation that does not depend also metaphysically on conscious experiences is mysterious or basic, therefore violating

²⁰⁶ Conee 1994, p. 144.

²⁰⁷ In my opinion, Lewis 1990 and Stalnaker 2008 would deny a positive answer. They seem to be convinced that a convergence is in principle problematic, since it would lead to an incommunicability of phenomenal information. For my purposes, I think that this issue can be left aside. In my opinion, the problem of communicating phenomenal information is very interesting, I, however, do not see how this is an argument against knowledge by acquaintance. Gertler puts it the following way:

Stalnaker is right to say that phenomenal information is incommunicable, so long as communicability requires (roughly) that the information at issue can be conveyed simply by uttering a descriptive statement expressing it. But the acquaintance theorist will argue that the incommunicability of phenomenal information is not objectionable. (Gertler 2012a, p. 122)

Of course descriptive statements cannot be objections against the acquaintance approach, since, as Russell already explained, there is a difference between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description.

Levine's Material Constraint. However, I also pointed out that this move leads to the same result, since mysterious or basic phenomenal properties disregard the same constraint. Now, assuming that the acquaintance theorist wants to explain her proclaimed relation and does not want to violate physicalism, and therefore moves to Conee's strategy, she has to pay a price most proponents probably would not accept. Claiming that knowledge by acquaintance is no basis for propositional knowledge, leaves very little weight to any acquaintance theory.²⁰⁸ According to Balog, acquaintance with our phenomenal properties should lead to the following: "*We know our conscious states not by inference but by immediate acquaintance which gives us direct, unmediated, substantial insight into their nature.*"²⁰⁹ This means, because of an epistemologically direct and metaphysically unmediated relation to our phenomenal properties, we should obtain substantial knowledge about the nature of those properties. Since this is not only an epistemological but also a metaphysical claim about the nature of things, it is particularly strong.

Acquaintance usually claims epistemic specialness. The intuition that it may lead to insights about the metaphysical nature of phenomenal properties shows that the acquaintance theorist is convinced about the substantiality of her knowledge claim. A disconnection from factual knowledge, however, leaves the acquaintance approach only with a minor role. To get to know new facts, acquaintance is not required. Of course, we can only know intimately how we experience our phenomenal properties by having them and being acquainted with them, which however does not give us any special insight, since we know all the facts about those properties without being acquainted with them. Until now, the acquaintance theory was strongly connected to intuitions about the *privileged access* or epistemic asymmetry (2) and infallibility or incorrigibility (3). It was supposed to explain these intuitions. An acquaintance approach in Conee's spirit however, seems to be tied to the experience thesis (6). This thesis states that knowledge about phenomenal properties can only be acquired by having the relevant experience. This is of course not an explanation, but rather a motivation for a (necessary) condition. Acquaintance therefore is degraded

²⁰⁸ To give acquaintance more weight, the acquaintance theorist has to insist that acquaintance is a necessary condition for propositional knowledge about the phenomenal. For discussion see Nida-Rümelin 2010.

²⁰⁹ Balog 2009, p. 299.

from a substantial theory about knowledge of phenomenal properties to a motivation for a condition. A serious acquaintance theorist should not be able to accept this implication.

But it gets worse. In my opinion, even if an acquaintance theorist bites the bullet and accepts this weak account, acquaintance is in serious trouble. Since I have already shown that to demystify the acquaintance relation one needs ontologically basic phenomenal properties in the Levineian sense. The Conee solution however assumes the contrary, namely phenomenal properties are physical properties. So, apart from the consequence that there is no substantial knowledge involved, it seems again unclear how the acquaintance relation can be explained or what it can explain. Again the theory seems to be nothing more than a restatement of a different intuition about phenomenal properties or mysterious and basic. To see this, the following distinction made by Conee himself is helpful:

[...] [I]n order for someone to know Cambridge, it is sufficient for the person to be thoroughly familiar with Cambridge by sensory observations. There is no substantially more intimate sort of awareness of a city that a person can have. But in order for someone to know a phenomenal quality, it is not sufficient for the person to know facts about the quality, not even all such facts.²¹⁰

The cited passage is supposed to show the difference between two types of familiarity. While knowledge about all facts is sufficient to be familiar with a city or a house, to intimately know our phenomenal qualities it is not. There is the need for something extra, namely a direct or acquaintance relation with those qualities. This means in my opinion, to correctly account for 'being familiar with a city', one only needs to attend to the factual content of that observation. To know one's phenomenal properties however, it is not enough to consider experiential facts, one must instantiate or undergo the experience itself. According to this interpretation, instantiating an experience is the most direct way of assessing phenomenal properties. This however, is basically what the experience thesis (6) states. One can only acquire knowledge

²¹⁰ Conee 1994, p. 144.

about phenomenal properties by having or instantiating the relevant experience. Now, if a directness relation – and therefore acquaintance – is nothing more than being instantiated, then knowledge by acquaintance is identical to the experience thesis.

To overcome this difficulty the acquaintance theorist can maintain that a directness or acquaintance relation is not simply instantiation. In this case, apart from being no basis for factual knowledge, this relation remains a mystery. If phenomenal properties are physical properties and physicalism is true, then current conscious experiences depend on their representational content and their objects. Justification of knowledge of phenomenal properties therefore does not depend on ongoing conscious experiences alone and therefore acquaintance fails. There is, however, yet another move open to the acquaintance theorist in arguing²¹¹ that, via strong transparency, we have a direct, acquaintance relation with the objects of our experiences. This however seems to me a claim at best. I cannot see how this assertion explains anything. My suspicion is that one tries to protect the *privileged access* intuition at all cost, even if that means to introduce an obscure acquaintance relation.

Now, I should allow the acquaintance theorist to answer. One should agree²¹² that Conee's account of acquaintance leaves out an explanation. Also, one might agree that taking away knowledge by acquaintance as the basis for propositional knowledge is by itself already a denial of a substantial knowledge account. The above cited paragraph about Conee's distinction between 'familiarity' with a city or a house and the 'familiarity' with ongoing conscious experiences leaves this difference unexplained. It is not clear what makes phenomenal properties so distinct. The needed explanation, acquaintance theorist might argue, stems from the difference between phenomenal and physical properties. This of course violates again Levine's Materialist Constraint, but the acquaintance theorist can insist that phenomenal properties are essentially experiential – just as the knowledge argument claims – and therefore ontologically different from physical properties. Gertler concludes therefore that this ontological difference “[...] is a substantive explanatory hypothesis.”²¹³

This final explanatory attempt of the acquaintance theorist leaves me to

²¹¹ In my understanding, this view is developed in Tye 2009b.

²¹² Gertler 1999 certainly does.

²¹³ Gertler 1999, p. 328.

conclude three things about the acquaintance approach. First: An extremely weak version of acquaintance is synonymous with the experience thesis. Everyone can agree with this idea since it is not an explanation, but simply a condition to produce knowledge about phenomenal properties. It is compatible with physicalism, but has in the end nothing substantial to it. Second: A substantial account of acquaintance can only be defended if one is willing to accept mysterious or Levineian basic phenomenal properties, which violate the Material Constraint, or it is simply a restatement of the *privileged access* intuition. The acquaintance theorist however may have good arguments to explore this account. It is hard to deny this approach an immediate attractiveness. Therefore we should not – on the basis of its incompatibility with physicalism alone – disallow this approach. Third: However anti-physicalism always has something mysterious to it. Unless there are especially convincing arguments, it seems appropriate to look for an alternative. I therefore suggest looking for an alternative explanation for intuitions about the *privileged access* to our phenomenology.

II. SELF-KNOWLEDGE, PRIVILEGED ACCESS TO THE PHENOMENAL AND ALTERNATIVES

II.1. Self-knowledge and the privileged access to the phenomenal

So far we have seen that the epistemic specialness of self-knowledge is guaranteed by the *privileged access* to our conscious mental states. Further, *privileged access* is usually constituted by two dimensions: 1) special epistemic security or certainty and 2) a unique method or introspection. Both are in general intimately connected. Until now however nothing has been said about how these conditions can be understood. First of all, when we talk about self-knowledge, what needs explanation is the intuition that it is epistemically superior to knowledge about the world. A way to accomplish this is to introduce statement 1) above. *Privileged access* guarantees epistemic supremacy. As seen in the last chapter, Gertler argues that acquaintance can ensure exactly this. Consider her condition 3) again: it states, more or less, that acquaintance leads to introspective self-knowledge, where judgments depending on it, are epistemically better justified than empirical knowledge. The simple explanation is that this kind of self-knowledge is not vulnerable to the same defeaters as empirical knowledge is. That means, whether a mad scientist is playing with the causal nexus of a sensation has no impact on this sort of self-knowledge, while it clearly defeats knowledge about the world.²¹⁴ I concluded in the last chapter that Gertler, however, does not really explain this fact. Rather, she restates what we assume from the start. Still, for an analysis of the self-knowledge intuition this approach is quite helpful. Implementing Gertler's thought into the self-knowledge intuition means that what needs explanation is not self-knowledge, but why certain defeaters impact knowledge about the world, but not self-knowledge. At a first glance, the self-knowledge intuitions, then, demands for epistemic specialness, it is not necessarily concerned with a unique method, e.g. introspection. In other words, self-knowledge asks for *privileged access* in the sense of 1), leaving the function of 2) open.

²¹⁴ See Gertler 2012a.

What then is the function of introspection? The short answer is that introspection is the process involved when we target the mind. It stands in contrast to perception, the process involved when we target objects in our surroundings. To understand the involvement of introspection in the quest for epistemic privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal, it seems that a characterization of this process is in order.

II.1.1. Introspection

Introspection may basically be characterized by the following three traits: 1) the necessary features of introspection; 2) targets of introspection; and 3) the products of introspection.²¹⁵ This means that, since introspection tells us something about our own mental states and processes, introspection has to first meet certain minimal conditions. Some requirements are considered uncontroversial, others, however, are not demanded by all philosophers.

One first minimal condition is the *mentality condition*. According to Schwitzgebel, the idea behind this condition is that it requires that introspection be directed inward and therefore *primarily* tells us something about our own mentality resulting in judgments which may or may not result in knowledge. A further requirement is the so-called *first-person condition*. It basically states that introspection is only about one's *own* mental states and not, at least directly, about the mental states of others. Introspection can therefore only count as direct method, when applied to one's own mind. Whether or not it has any influence about judging other minds is controversial. Most philosophers would attribute such a judgment at least a non-introspective component. A last uncontroversial condition is the *temporal proximity condition*. It states that a cognitive process only counts as introspection, if it is about current or instantly past mental episodes. Therefore pure instances of introspection only appear in a very short time frame. Imagine, for example, one thinks about a mental state from yesterday morning. In that case, the current self-reflective

²¹⁵ In an extensive and fundamental analysis Schwitzgebel succeeds to clarify most of the basic characteristics, problems and notions of introspection. Since I am not concerned with a special theory of introspection, but introspection in general, I will assume most of his general illustration. For detailed discussion see Schwitzgebel 2014.

thought does not only depend on the current introspective process, it depends also on one's memory.²¹⁶

According to Schwitzgebel, however, some philosophers require further conditions for introspection. One further requirement is the *directness condition*. This condition basically states that a cognitive process can only count as introspection, when it is direct. This view is closely connected to the acquaintance approach. This idea assumes, at least, that processes which collect information about the outside world and infer from this information facts about mental states do not count as introspection. Strong transparency theorists, however, have to reject this claim. A further requirement of this type is the *detection condition*. This requirement claims that introspection has to detect an already pre-existing mental state. The yielded knowledge is therefore only causally dependent on that state. This means, when introspecting, the introspected state and the introspecting state are ontologically independent. Their connection is merely causal. Therefore, introspection cannot be involved in creating the target state. Most perceptual theories of introspection assume this condition, while the proponents of acquaintance may deny it. A last controversial requirement is the *effort condition*. This condition maintains that introspection is only achieved by effort. It is therefore not an automatic cognitive process. This means, we are not constantly introspecting; rather introspection requires intent. It is a special kind of reflection about one's own mental states. The disagreement about this condition stems from the claim that having a conscious experience – and having a conscious experience can be seen as relatively constant – needs introspective monitoring of the mental life.²¹⁷

When talking about the targets of introspection, on the one hand, one may consider all kinds of different mental states. Even though not all of the mental life is available to introspection – especially unconscious desires or character traits –, there is a considerable number of possibilities. Schwitzgebel considers attitudes and conscious experiences as the most viable candidates. Sub-categories of conscious experiences, like the phenomenal properties and the content of those experiences, should also be

²¹⁶ For further details about these conditions see Schwitzgebel 2014.

²¹⁷ For detailed discussion see Schwitzgebel 2014.

included. Products of introspection, on the other hand, are, however, a badly explored subject. Schwitzgebel puts it the following way:

Most philosophers hold that introspection yields something like beliefs or judgments about one's own mind, but others prefer to characterize the products of introspection as “thoughts”, “representations”, “awareness”, or the like.”²¹⁸

Knowledge, judgments or believes are therefore also entailed. In my opinion they deserve a special mention. First of all because I am discussing here the involvement of introspection in the formation of self-knowledge and second because the general philosophical interest often focuses on them.

II.1.2. Introspection and self-knowledge about the phenomenal

Now, let me consider privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal again. As stated above, the self-knowledge intuition that needs explanation is *privileged access* as a form of epistemic security or certainty. Introspection is usually considered to be the unique method that guarantees this epistemic privilege.²¹⁹ Since any theory of introspection is bound, at least, to the uncontroversial characteristics above, an introspective theory of privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal needs to be developed within this kind of framework. Keeping therefore these restrictions in mind, introspection may be investigated from two different angles. Either a theory of introspection defines epistemic justification, or the other way around. An example for the latter is clearly the acquaintance approach. As we have seen, the acquaintance theorist claims a special epistemic relation – a direct relation to its truthmaker, in this case to the phenomenal properties of an experience – therefore already shaping the corresponding theory of introspection. The resulting obvious, essential conclusion is that introspection cannot be like perception. An example for the former approach is

²¹⁸ Schwitzgebel 2014, § 1.3.

²¹⁹ Not all philosophers agree. Especially proponents of the rationality model disagree.

the inner sense model of introspection²²⁰. The radical standard version of this model claims that introspection is analogous to perception. The relation to the target – here, phenomenal properties – is causal and therefore one should not assume a special epistemic status. Often though, it seems not entirely clear how to separate those two positions. The question about epistemic specialness and the “unique method” of introspection seem intimately entangled. However, in an implicit sense, one always has to decide what she wants to explain.

Wanting to know the reason for the epistemic specialness of knowledge about the phenomenal, primarily asks for an explanation of the *privileged access* in the sense of 1). Only secondarily it is a question of a detailed theory of introspection. Nonetheless, one has to, at least minimally, secure reliability and compatibility with the above claimed conditions. Also, since the phenomenal – even though an excellent candidate²²¹ – is one particular target for privileged self-knowledge, one should remove obstacles that may stem from arguments against introspection as a whole.

One radical idea – that affects all accounts of introspection – is to argue that introspection is not one single process, but rather a plurality of processes.²²² If this assumption is correct, then one could argue that introspection may not be a reliable process to obtain privileged self-knowledge. In short this means, what we call introspection is in reality not a single cognitive process but a bundle of different processes. Our cognitive apparatus uses any of these processes according to its needs. This is not only the case when we introspect different targets (between-case claim), but it also applies when introspecting one and the same target over again (within-case claim).

For privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal the between-case claim is of no particular interest, since this kind of knowledge relies only on one target, namely the phenomenal properties of conscious experiences. Whether or not *attitudes* imply the same introspective process as *conscious experiences* may not have consequences for the within-case claim. Consider e.g. Christopher Hill's idea. Hill thinks that certain target mental states are more similar to each other than to others. For example,

²²⁰ See especially Armstrong 1981 and Sellars 1968, 1982.

²²¹ See e.g. Alston 1971.

²²² See Schwitzgebel 2012 for extensive discussion.

conscious experiences share a greater resemblance with each other than they share with attitudes. Hill concludes from this circumstance that the faculties involved to detect the former are probably in general more similar to each other than they are to the latter to the faculties involved in the latter case.²²³ What Hill is basically arguing is that introspecting different targets may imply different capacities as well. Since introspective judgments are based on different faculties, one unified account of introspection may seem problematic. This seems to me a valid and reasonable point, but no threat to an introspective account as a whole. Introspection applied to only one particular target (within-case claim) is not touched by this view. Since one does not have to claim that an introspective account of phenomenal properties is valid for different targets or valid in general, the between-case claim can be disregarded for our purposes.

Circumstances for the within-case claim are different. This version of the thesis assumes that even for one particular target there might be different introspective mechanisms involved. Schwitzgebel endorses the following:

[I]ntrospection is the dedication of central cognitive resources, or attention, to the task of arriving at a judgment about one's current, or very recently past, conscious experience, using or attempting to use some capacities that are unique to the first-person case [...], with the aim or intention that one's judgment reflect some relatively direct sensitivity the target state. It by no means follows that from this characterization that introspection is a single or coherent process or the same set of processes every time.²²⁴

To see what is meant let me consider one of his examples:

I look out the window and reach the judgment not only that there's a tree outside but also that I'm having a visual experience of that tree. I have greenish visual experience of the leaves, and the tree's spreading branches seem to dwarf the

²²³ See Hill 2009, 2011 and Schwitzgebel 2012 for discussion.

²²⁴ Schwitzgebel 2012, pp. 42-43.

mountain in the background. It has just rained, and in the reemerging sun, the tree sparkles strikingly. Focusing my gaze on the rightmost branches, I notice a fluttering indistinctness in my experience of the left side of the tree. I cross my eyes, thinking it might make the tree double, but instead the tree only swims around my visual field, blurring and flattening.²²⁵

According to Schwitzgebel, one can draw three immediate conclusions from this example. The first conclusion is about the greenish visual experience. Assuming that someone is standing next to the 'Schwitzgebel' of the example, we may suppose that the other person can arrive at the same conclusions about 'Schwitzgebel's' greenish visual experience as well as Schwitzgebel himself. For all the other person knows is that, one, 'Schwitzgebel' is in front of a tree with green leaves with good the viewing conditions, and two, 'Schwitzgebel' is not colorblind. Even though this case does not have to assume that some sort of knowledge about outward objects grounds 'Schwitzgebel's' knowledge about his greenish visual experience, one may still think that knowledge about the world enters, in combination with 'Schwitzgebel's' capacities for getting to know his own conscious experiences, to justify judgments about the greenish visual experience. According to Schwitzgebel, this is in general the case, since it may be supposed that we know different things about our environment and that this knowledge influences not only our experiences, but also our expectations about those experiences. Therefore it influences the willingness to make judgments about a particular experience and those judgments themselves. The consequence, then, is that often judgments about an experience – especially when visual – reduce to judgments about the outer, perceived object.²²⁶ According to this description, when we introspect our visual experiences we do not employ one singular process. Since there is no process of perceiving the outer object and apart from that a process of detecting, both the perceiving and the detecting process overlap.

A second conclusion, according to Schwitzgebel, is that there is more to those judgments than just knowledge of external objects. It also forms part of the cognitive

²²⁵ Schwitzgebel 2012, p. 32.

²²⁶ This claim is basically a form of weak transparency.

process that dissects a visual experience that it fails to discriminate between certain properties of the tree. Even though we are willing to allow this experience to be a greenish visual experience, we are not so confident in ourselves to assume that we can differentiate between all shades of green present in that experience. Failing to discriminate those properties, therefore, forms part of the cognitive process which produces certain judgments about this greenish experience.

A final conclusion Schwitzgebel draws is about cultural influences. For him, to see the tree occult the mountain (like in a snapshot) or the beauty of the tree for example, depends on certain cultural concepts, or is at least culturally influenced. In general, Schwitzgebel therefore thinks that what we assume to be obvious introspective judgments are often judgments which are, at least in part, constituted by non-introspective cognitive processes. This means that those judgments entail cognitive processes which are clearly not a form of introspection.²²⁷

Now, as long as we talk about descriptive knowledge about conscious experiences *as a whole*²²⁸, I think that Schwitzgebel's argument is quite convincing. It seems true that certain features – like knowledge of external objects, cultural influences and so on – form part of the cognitive processes we use to obtain knowledge about particular experiences. That being said, however, the question still remains as to whether it applies to all cases of introspective self-knowledge. To examine whether the plurality thesis works as an argument against introspective reliability of judgments about the phenomenal, we may want to consider the *method of phenomenal contrast*²²⁹.

The method of phenomenal contrast has been brought forward by Susanna Siegel to determine the content of visual experiences. I will not engage in the debate

²²⁷ See Schwitzgebel 2012.

²²⁸ When I say 'as a whole', I mean a conscious experience in a certain context. The example Schwitzgebel gives is a very vivid and complex one. Vivid, in the sense that he is sitting in front of a window and not only describes what he is seeing. He also captures in what mood he is and, in a sense, what he is feeling and so on. Complex, since he considers more than many would ask for. It seems to me that Schwitzgebel assumes that to adequately describe an experience one has, means to consider the experience from every angle and also become aware of all contextual circumstances involved to create the experience.

²²⁹ See Siegel 2007, 2011.

about theories of content of experiences²³⁰, nor will I explain the method of phenomenal contrast in detail. What matters for the current context are the bearings of this method on the issue of introspecting phenomenal properties. The concept behind the method of phenomenal contrast is that we are not capable of distinguishing certain hypotheses about the *content of experiences* by introspection alone. Introspection is capable to already rule out certain contents – due to their phenomenal properties – it is, however, not able to decide about correctness in other cases.

To get an idea about why introspection is limited, we may want to consider Siegel's following example:

Suppose you are looking at a bowl of expertly designed wax fruit. You have a visual experience when you see this scene, and we can ask which properties your experience represents as instantiated in the scene before you.²³¹

According to Siegel, we have two options to evaluate this example regarding the representational content of the experience. The first – the so-called color-shape hypothesis – states that your experience represents colors and shapes but nothing more. This means that your visual experience does not represent them as fruits. The second hypothesis is the cherry-content hypothesis. It claims that your visual experience actually represents the fruit as being a fruit and also that they are fruits in a bowl. It seems that introspection is of no help when deciding between the first and the second hypothesis. Introspection is therefore limited in its conclusions about the content.

In what respect can introspection help to determine the content? Siegel defends that for any content represented by an experience, there is a corresponding phenomenal character or property. This presupposes at least the following claim: contents of experiences have to be phenomenally adequate²³². If I understand her correctly, this means an experience with the represented content 'yellow' will differ

²³⁰ For clarification see Siegel 2013.

²³¹ Siegel 2007, p. 129.

²³² See Siegel 2007, 2011.

phenomenally from an experience with the represented content 'blue'. Therefore, introspection can detect the *phenomenal contrast* of those experiences and therefore certain contents²³³. Introspection is, according to Siegel, basically about phenomenal properties in a narrow sense; that means introspection can detect phenomenal differences in different experiences and rule out certain contents. This however also means that introspection is quite limited. It is basically only capable of detecting the phenomenal contrast.

How does the idea of limiting introspection to the phenomenal contrast enable an argument against the plurality thesis? The key lies in the analysis of experiences. While Schwitzgebel seems to exploit the idea of a conscious experience *as a whole*, Siegel seems to develop a picture that analyses conscious (visual) experiences. Her analysis interprets conscious (visual) experience in general as having a content of some sort and corresponding phenomenal properties. More importantly however, authentic introspection is related to the phenomenal properties of an experience, as it detects the phenomenal contrast, and not to the content.

Now, Schwitzgebel's pluralistic account describes the forming of an introspective judgment about a conscious experience as a combination of factors. In a situation where I see a green tree, my introspective judgment about this 'green tree' depends on knowledge of the external world, my expectations, cultural influences and so on. In my view, the reason for such an interpretation of introspection stems from the target, which is the conscious experience *as a whole*. The plurality is basically created by giving introspection a complex target, or better the plurality thesis creates this complex target in the first place. To state it differently: if we assume the 'green tree' experience *as a whole* to begin with and analyze the formation of a corresponding judgment, then it seems obvious that we have to consider cognitive processes which cannot count as introspective. A judgment about experiences *as a whole* may include components of background knowledge or knowledge about the

²³³ I want to note that the question about phenomenal adequacy will have no effect on the rest of the discussion here. This claim may, however, be controversial. It depends on whether or not one thinks of phenomenal adequacy in a stricter or looser sense. In my opinion, in a stricter sense, phenomenal adequacy would mean that an experience with the content yellow has to have phenomenal yellow properties and, therefore, makes a strong claim about the ontology and metaphysics of phenomenal properties. In a looser sense, one could defend that phenomenal properties are phenomenally adequate, if they are co-existing with the instantiation of a particular experience.

world, expectations, cultural influences and other factors. This, however, depends on how many contextual circumstances one is willing to include. In the end, it comes down to how many determining factors of an experience one supposedly has to know in order to know the experience *as a whole*. However, self-knowledge of phenomenal properties does not depend on this kind of endeavor. Introspecting phenomenal properties of an experience only relies on those phenomenal properties themselves or at least that is what many introspection theorists²³⁴ argue. Interesting enough is that this brings us back to the initial question about the epistemic features of self-knowledge, or better the issue of the privileged access in the sense of 1). An introspective account of phenomenal properties itself, however, is not endangered by the within-case claim.

II.2. Self-knowledge about the phenomenal and alternatives for privileged access

Assuming that the argument against the plurality thesis is sound, and the possibility for an introspective account of phenomenal properties in general prevails, we are back at the issue of the privileged access in the sense of 1). So far it was said that the epistemic specialness in the sense of 1) states that self-knowledge is certain. This epistemic certainty stems from the idea that we are infallible and omniscient about the phenomenal properties of our ongoing conscious experiences. In this context, infallibility refers to the idea that we cannot have false beliefs about those phenomenal properties. Omniscience states that having those phenomenal properties is sufficient to know them. Those two ideas are usually considered to be the strongest claims about epistemic specialness. However, epistemic specialness can be achieved in many different ways. Alston, in a detailed paper about the matter, adds the following four:

Indubitability-No one, in fact, ever has grounds for doubting a
[first-person-current-mental-state-belief or] FPCMSB.

Incorrigibility-No one else ever, in fact, succeeds in showing

²³⁴ See footnote 180.

that a FPCMSB is mistaken.

Self-warrant-FPCMSB's are, as a matter of fact, always warranted.

Truth sufficiency-True FPCMSB's are, as a matter of fact, always warranted.²³⁵

I do not claim that this list of interpretations of privileged access is complete. I think however that it is enough to show the impressive amount of versions held by philosophers.

Since I want to ensure *certain* self-knowledge, the privileged access to the phenomenal has to justify this endeavor. This means, all Alston cases clearly affect my efforts by weakening the strong initial claims. That being said, we can see that all versions of privileged access coordinate the relation between the experience and the corresponding judgment. It seems, however, that only the strongest concept of certainty – entailing infallibility and omniscience – asks for a special relation. That is why the standard manner to ground strong certainty is to assume acquaintance. Acquaintance is a relation that contrasts causal relations²³⁶. It is direct and unmediated in an epistemic and metaphysical sense, therefore giving credence to infallibility and omniscience. However, since I have shown acquaintance to be implausible, we need a different way to justify certain self-knowledge about the phenomenal, one however that maintains the interpretation of certainty in the strong sense.

To get a grip on the issue, we may want to consider cases where certainty does not depend on acquaintance. As stated before, Alston's cases may constitute certainty – even if the kind of certainty established is weaker – without relying on basic relations in the Levineian sense. In general, it is enough for all these interpretations of privileged access to assume that a judgment is especially warranted or that there are no grounds to doubt that judgment. This means that a directness relation especially in the metaphysical sense is not necessary. However, for many this fact alone means that since there is no directness relation between the phenomenal properties and the

²³⁵ Alston 1971, p. 239.

²³⁶ Causal, here, means the way the inner sense model of introspection assumes it. This view holds that the relation between the phenomenal and the corresponding judgment is causal and contingent.

corresponding judgment anymore – at least there is none in the metaphysical sense – the basis for certainty in the strong sense is eroded. It may therefore not be enough to just ask for a special warrant.

We may, however, want to consider other examples and see whether or not they can do better. Following Stoljar, one might introduce 'epistemic principles'. Those principles describe the relation between experience and knowledge.²³⁷ Stoljar considers three 'epistemic principles'²³⁸ for knowing our experiences. One, first principle is self-presentation. Self-representation claims that "[...] having an experience puts you in a position to know or justifiably believe *that you are having the experience*."²³⁹ A second principle is understanding and states that "[...] if one has an experience at a certain time, then one understands what that experience is at that time."²⁴⁰ A final principle considered by Stoljar is revelation. Revelation may be regarded to be a particular strong version of such an 'epistemic principle'. It asserts that [by having an experience] [...] you know or are in a position to know the essence or nature of the experience.²⁴¹ At this point, the important question is whether the principles entertain special epistemic relations or not; and if so, how those relations may be justified.

Stoljar clearly uses the first epistemic principle, namely self-presentation, much like Chisholm.²⁴² So far, I have only discussed the acquaintance thesis as a version of an unmediated observation model of self-knowledge. Interestingly enough, Chisholm's self-presentation principle suggests an alternative model. When talking about the possibility of knowledge, or what we can know, Chisholm defines self-presentation the following way:

If (i) the property of being-F is such that every property it conceptually entails includes the property of thinking, if (ii) a person S has the property of being-F and if (iii) S believes

²³⁷ In a sense, all versions of the privileged access are governed by 'epistemic principles' (not only the Alston cases, also infallibility and omniscience).

²³⁸ Especially the first principle, or self-presentation, is based on Chisholm's foundationalist theory of knowledge. For discussion on the issue and other principles see especially Chisholm 1981 and 1987.

²³⁹ Stoljar 2009, p. 116.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁴² The term 'self-presentation' however goes back to Meinong.

himself to be *F*, then it is certain for *S* that he is *F*.²⁴³

According to Gertler, this principle basically claims that psychological properties, which are self-presenting, refer to special epistemic and psychological features. This claim does not have to entail the proposal of an acquaintance relation. It only means that Chisholm's theory needs to be analyzed in the manner the unmediated observation model is interpreted in general. That means to accept that a) self-presentations exclude the direct ascription of its negation; b) careful introspection of self-presentations entails their attribution; and c) self-ascriptions of self-presentations are in a sense certain.²⁴⁴ For Chisholm, the self-presenting principle may be applied to intentions and sensory (or being appeared to) states. Whether it is possible to attribute certainty to such a broad variety of mental states is doubtful, it is however interesting whether this principle applies to the phenomenal or not. Chisholm's proposal however, also weakens the interpretation of certainty. By definition certainty, according to Chisholm, is the following:

h is certain for *S* at *t* =df (i) Accepting *h* is more reasonable for *S* at *t* than withholding *h* (i.e., not accepting *h* and not accepting not-*h*) and (ii) there is no *i* such that accepting *i* is more reasonable for *S* at *t* than accepting *h*.²⁴⁵

Here, certainty is closely tied to what is reasonable for the subject to accept. This may lead to especially justified judgments, it lacks however certainty in the strong sense.²⁴⁶ This however seems to apply to Stoljar's version of the principle also. Since the unrestricted interpretation of having an experience puts one in a position to know that one has that experience employs the reasoning of (ii) and (iii) of Gertler's analysis. Also and more importantly, it does not claim more than certainty in Chisholm's sense.

For Stoljar the second epistemic principle – understanding – does not require any description or concept. It does not even have to last an extensive period of time. Basically he assumes that understanding may be a form a tacit knowledge of what an

²⁴³ Chisholm 1990, p. 209.

²⁴⁴ See footnote 30 and especially Gertler 2011b.

²⁴⁵ Chisholm 1976, p. 27.

²⁴⁶ Again, many would claim that this is due to the fact that self-presenting properties are not directly tied to their corresponding judgments, at least not metaphysically.

experience is. Stoljar describes the principle in the following way:

[...] what understanding says is that if a creature is psychologically complex enough to undergo a certain experience at a certain time, then the creature is psychologically complex enough to know what that experience is at least in the ordinary sense that is sufficient for understanding.²⁴⁷

As far as I can tell, the key question is whether the ordinary sense of knowing what establishes certainty, and if so in what sense. Certainty is probably not the ordinary sense of knowing what refers to, at least not in the strong sense. We may assume that knowing what an experience is in the ordinary sense leads to a justified degree of knowledge. We also may assume that this justification is extremely reliable – since we are talking about experiences –, but we do not assume that this establishes a strong sense of certainty. Stoljar seems to admit that by stating that “[...] sometimes when we speak of someone’s understanding something we mean only that they know what it is in [a] less demanding sense.”²⁴⁸

The third epistemic principle, according to Stoljar, is revelation. In his view, revelation stands in an interesting relation to understanding. While understanding is necessary to establish revelation, it is not sufficient. One could say that understanding is basically the usual or common form of knowing what, while revelation asks for “an uncommonly demanding and literal sense of ‘knowing what’”²⁴⁹. This demanding sense follows from the claim that by having an experience we are supposed to be in a position to know or simply know the *essence* or *nature* of that experience. The general standard notion may be put the following way:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know that Q is F (for F is the essence of Q).²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Stoljar 2009, p. 117.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁴⁹ Lewis 1995, p. 141.

²⁵⁰ Similar notions may be found in e.g. Damjanovic 2012, Lewis 1995, Lihoreau 2014 and Stoljar 2009.

However, if true, clearly revelation gives us an amazing insight of what experiences essentially consist in. Since we should suspect already at this point that this profound claim about experiences is closely linked to their phenomenal properties as well, we may have a relevant epistemic principle that could explain the privileged access. To find out whether or not we can get the revelation thesis of the ground, we first need to answer the following two questions: i) what is the uncommonly demanding sense of 'knowing what' or what does knowing the *essence* respectively *nature of* an experience mean? ii) Does revelation establish certainty in the above strong sense? In the spirit of Damjanovic, a short answer to i) is something like this: knowing the *essence of* an experience is to know 'what it takes to be'²⁵¹ an experience or, to put it differently, to know what makes an experience an experience. Now, if one accepts such a characterization, then one should, at least at a first glance, accept 2) as well. Does that mean we have found an alternative explanation to construe privileged or certain self-knowledge about the phenomenal in a strong sense? Before answering such a controversial question, some background information about the hypothesis may be in order.

II.3. Revelation

The revelation thesis was first introduced by Bertrand Russell in the context of philosophy of colors.²⁵² The terminology however derives from Mark Johnston²⁵³. Being an epistemological argument, the thesis is about our epistemic position. It refers to what we are in a position to know or simply know, by having an experience. Since the thesis is about the 'essence' or 'nature' of some property²⁵⁴, it also has

²⁵¹ Damjanovic 2012, p. 71.

²⁵² See Russell 1967.

²⁵³ See Johnston 1992. Lewis calls it 'Identification thesis'. See Lewis 1995.

²⁵⁴ Many attempts have been made to describe the notion of 'essence'. While e.g. Kripke seems to think that 'essence' simply refers to the necessary truths about a property, see Kripke 1980, e.g. Fine shows that not all necessary truths about a property are also essential. See Fine 1994. It is clear that a detailed discussion about this issue goes beyond the scope of this analysis. Since both approaches may be controversial, I suggest that we apply a simple account. We may therefore understand

metaphysical consequences. As described above, it is an epistemic principle which describes the relation between the property and the corresponding knowledge. Revelation, according to Stoljar and Lewis²⁵⁵, can be applied to both, experiences themselves and what experiences are of. The latter concerns properties which are closely connected to experiences²⁵⁶, e.g. properties like colors. In contemporary philosophy, the revelation thesis is viewed as highly controversial. The most contested part concerns the claim that we can know the 'essence' or 'nature' of a particular property. As stated above, knowing the 'essence' or 'nature' of a property suggests that one knows everything about the property in question that makes the property *that* property. This means, everything else one may learn about that property is accidental or contingent and therefore not necessary for the constitution of that property.

There is however a second concern. It is regarding the epistemic position we are in. This position is different from others, in the sense that it is clearly superior. Stoljar explains the situation in the following manner:

[...] I have a diamond in my pocket. It does not begin to follow that I know the essence of diamonds, or that the only things left to know are various facts about the distribution of things with this essence or nature—whether other people have diamonds in their pockets, and so on. For one thing, merely having a diamond in my pocket puts me in no epistemic position whatsoever. I may have a diamond in my pocket and have no idea what diamonds are. Moreover, even if I know what diamonds are in the ordinary sense that most of us do—be able to reliably pick out diamonds at the jewelers, know that the biggest diamonds come from South Africa and so on—I may be quite ignorant of the chemical nature of diamonds, and so ignorant of something that is surely essential to them. So,

'essence' in Lewis's sense: "a property of [a quale] Q such that, necessarily, Q has it and nothing else does." (Lewis 1995, p. 142).

²⁵⁵ See Stoljar 2009 and Lewis 1995.

²⁵⁶ See Stoljar 2009.

according to proponents of revelation, having an itch puts one in an epistemic position with respect to itches that having a diamond does not put one in with respect to diamonds. I am in a position with respect to itches (and experiences more generally) such that the only thing left to learn are accidental truths. But I am not in that position with respect to diamonds.²⁵⁷

One way of characterizing this extraordinary epistemic position is to follow Williamson:

To be in a position to know *p* it is neither necessary to know *p*, nor sufficient to be physically or psychologically capable of knowing *p*. No obstacle must block one's path to knowing *p*. If one is in a position to know *p*, and one has done what one is in a position to do to decide whether *p* is true, then one does know *p*. The fact is open to one's view, unhidden, even if one does not yet see it.²⁵⁸

Damnjanovic suggests that to make this statement true what we have to do in particular cases is to reflect on the matter at stake.²⁵⁹ I guess that in general this may be the right approach. Since I am investigating self-knowledge of the phenomenal here, reflection should be understood as introspection or introspective judgments may, it simply seems to be a more appropriate interpretation. On a side note, I think that Williamson's characterization seems quite helpful, since in a solid reading it suggests certainty in a strong sense.

Now, being originally introduced as an epistemic principle in the philosophy of colors²⁶⁰, revelation holds that having an experience of a particular color puts one in the position to know the essence or nature of that color. In this case, the relation is not between the experience of that color and the corresponding knowledge. It rather states that we are in this kind of special epistemic position in respect to the color itself.

²⁵⁷ Stoljar 2009, pp. 115-116.

²⁵⁸ Williamson 2000, p. 95.

²⁵⁹ See Damnjanovic 2012.

²⁶⁰ For discussion see e.g. Byrne 2003, 2006; Byrne & Hilbert 1997, 2003, 2007; Campbell 1993, 2005; Glüer 2007, Harman 1996, Jackson 1996, Johnston 1992, 1996, 2004; Levin 2000, Levine 2007, Lewis 1997, Nida-Rümelin 2006 and Strawson 1989.

For example, Johnston – after concluding that the external world must be both, colored and not colored – distinguishes between 'core beliefs' and 'peripheral beliefs' to account for this position.²⁶¹ According to his interpretation 'core beliefs' are beliefs in the following sense:

were such beliefs to turn out not to be true we would then have trouble saying what they were false of, i.e., we would be deprived of a subject matter rather than having our views changed about a given subject matter.²⁶²

'Peripheral' beliefs on the contrary only refer to a change of mind about the subject matter. In Johnston's opinion when we talk *more inclusively* about the colors we ought to refer to 'core beliefs'. According to Muñoz-Suárez, he interprets revelation, therefore, as one of such 'core beliefs'.²⁶³ Johnston admits however that it is not the only one and because of its controversial status, not an easy belief to maintain.

As stated above, the basic idea of the revelation thesis about colors stems from Bertrand Russell. According to Russell, to know the colors themselves – and not only the truths about them – means the following:

The particular shade of colour that I am seeing . . . may have many things to be said about it . . . But such statements, though they make me know more truths about the colour, do not make me know the colour itself any better than I did before: so far as concerns knowledge about the colour itself, as opposed to knowledge of truths about it, I know the colour perfectly and completely when I see it and no further knowledge of it itself is even theoretically possible.²⁶⁴

In a more recent interpretation Strawson interprets revelation about the colors in the following manner:

[...] colour words are words for properties which are of such a

²⁶¹ For detailed discussion see Johnston 1992.

²⁶² Johnston 1992, p. 221.

²⁶³ See Muñoz-Suárez 2011.

²⁶⁴ Russell 1967, p. 47.

kind that their whole and essential nature as properties can be and is fully revealed in sensory, phenomenal-quality experience, given only the qualitative character that that sensory experience has.²⁶⁵

Finally, Johnston posits his own explicit account of revelation. The main reason may be that Russell's account is closely connected to his acquaintance approach or even equivalent to it. Johnston therefore offers a slightly different account. He agrees with Russell that being acquainted with a property is connected to 'knowing the nature of a property'.²⁶⁶ Both authors therefore claim that the revelation thesis entails acquaintance. In their view, it describes the epistemological position one is in – just by having a sensation or experience – to know a property by acquaintance. Since Russell's notion of acquaintance however is, according to Johnston, too strong²⁶⁷, he tries to solve the problem with the following operational account:

If you know or are acquainted with the nature of properties F1, F2, ... FN then you can know a family of similarity and difference relations (unity principle) holding among F1 through FN and know these without relying upon knowledge of the laws in which the properties are implicated or upon knowledge of which particulars have the properties.²⁶⁸

This approach implies that acquaintance comes in degrees. For acquaintance this means that it does not necessarily entail complete revelation, since it is enough to know certain similarities without having explicit propositional knowledge of the properties in question. What might sound strange at a first glance, serves however to disentangle acquaintance and revelation. Revelation still entails acquaintance, but there are not equivalent like in Russell's interpretation. This is one way of giving the revelation thesis about colors its own right to exist. As a result, the revelation thesis

²⁶⁵ Strawson 1989, p. 224.

²⁶⁶ See Johnston 1992, p. 254.

²⁶⁷ Johnston also holds that Russell's account of revelation is too strong. Further, he also thinks that Strawson's account of revelation may be quite too strong as well. To see this consider the following: "Strawson's claim is not only a lucid statement of Revelation, but also in effect a denial that there is any negotiating with Revelation when it comes to speaking of the colors. You must either completely endorse it or cease to speak of the colors." (Johnston 1992, p. 224).

²⁶⁸ Johnston 1992, p. 254.

about colors, in general, may be put in more or less the following structure:

Consider a subject S:

S has an experience E and E is about X.

Via revelation:

S knows the essence of X.²⁶⁹

Representing only the general idea of revelation about colors, one may ask for particular application. One popular version of the thesis is often defended by primitivists about colors.²⁷⁰ Primitivists usually share a common ground which can be called minimal primitivism²⁷¹. Byrne & Hilbert characterize this mutual assumption to mean that colors are ontologically independent entities which cannot be reduced to their physical properties. To this characterization they add one more constraint: primitivism denies that colors are relational properties between the perceiver and the viewing conditions.²⁷² Even though advocating for different versions, it is their view that most primitivists assume interpretations of Johnston's revelation thesis.²⁷³

Obviously stating the revelation thesis even in general terms is a somewhat difficult and controversial issue. According to Byrne & Hilbert however, we may consider the thesis to be a conjunction of the following two claims:

SELF-INTIMATION

If it is in the nature of the colors that p , then after careful reflection on color experience it seems to be in the nature of the colors that p .

[...] [And]:

INFALLIBILITY

²⁶⁹ Inspired by Muñoz-Suárez 2011.

²⁷⁰ Only a few views claim that primitivism and revelation are not compatible. For an opponent see e.g. Allen 2011.

²⁷¹ Minimal primitivists include: e.g. Boghossian & Velleman 1989, 1991; Chalmers 2006, Descartes 1991, Hardin 1993, Maund 1995 and Nida-Rümelin 2006.

²⁷² See Byrne & Hilbert 2007 for discussion.

²⁷³ For Byrne & Hilbert it is worth noting that revelation does not assume immediate revelation. It might be, so they claim, that the nature of a particular color reveals itself only after having a sufficient amount of color experiences.

If after careful reflection on color experience it seems to be in the nature of the colors that p , then it is in the nature of the colors that p .²⁷⁴

Especially due to self-intimation, it seems that revelation entails minimal primitivism. It remains however the question, whether or not minimal primitivism also entails revelation.

At a first glance, it seems that minimal primitivism neither entails infallibility nor self-intimation. Without adding major assumptions, Byrne & Hilbert, conclude however that minimal primitivism paired with infallibility entails self-intimation. Since, for them, minimal primitivism holds 'p' to be exclusively chromatic, it seems that “[...] given Infallibility, if 'It seems *not* to be in the nature of the colors that p' is true, and 'p' is purely chromatic, then 'p' is *false*.’”²⁷⁵ This allows the introduction of a *relative* harmless assumption, namely completeness. Completeness more or less states that if we can assume that a subject already had sufficient color experiences and also possesses the capacities to reflect carefully and the relevant ability to discern colors, we can also assume that the subject – if pressed – would assert a judgment, even if false. Since Byrne & Hilbert think that for every primitivist it is natural to take infallibility as background assumption, they conclude that minimal color primitivism most entail revelation necessarily.²⁷⁶ This means color primitivism has no other option than assuming the revelation thesis. Since the common ground of minimal primitivism already entails revelation, primitivism in general entails the thesis as well. Primitivism about colors is therefore one important approach to the colors that defends the revelation thesis.

In the beginning of the chapter, I already mentioned a second form of revelation. This form concerns experience itself²⁷⁷, it is about the nature of experience. According to Lewis, revelation about experience claims that “[...] when I have an experience with the quale Q, the knowledge I thereby gain reveals the essence of Q: a

²⁷⁴ Byrne & Hilbert 2007, p. 77.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁷⁶ For detailed discussion see Byrne & Hilbert 2007.

²⁷⁷ In my opinion, this form of revelation was employed in Husserl's phenomenology. His famous method to analyze experiences, to reveal the basic intentional structure of consciousness, seems to be viable only if revelation is true. For further discussion see e.g. Smith 2013.

property of Q such that, necessarily, Q has it and nothing else does.”²⁷⁸ According to Lewis this thesis is built in to folk psychology, since it is assumed that we have the ability to identify the qualia of experience. This intuition amounts to what was stated above, namely the demanding sense of 'knowing what'. One indication for the demanding interpretation of 'knowing what' may be seen in certain corresponding abilities it creates, i.e. recognize and imagine. The capacity to recognize can be described in terms of experiencing a quale the first time, and recognizing it again when it appears. Consider the simple example of a red quale. Once redness was experienced, only by having the experience again, one is in the position to know that one is having the same red experience as before. Within the same example, the ability to imagine consists of knowing beforehand how to imagine redness. Of course, only when actually experiencing redness one knows that one was imagining an experience that corresponds to redness.

Now, since revelation is intimately connected to an 'uncommonly demanding' sense of knowing what and proponents of revelation need, according to Lewis, ascribe to this demanding sense, it is only a small step to the idea that revelation is incompatible with physicalism.²⁷⁹ A physicalist claim needs to state, at least, that if revelation is true – and assuming that qualia are physical properties – we have to know that they are physical properties. Following Lewis's famous lines shows to what implausible consequence this reasoning leads, for a physicalist:

If for instance, Q is essentially the physical property of being an event of C-firing, and if I identify the qualia of my experience in the appropriate 'demanding and literal' sense, I come to know that what is going on in me is an event of C-firing. Contrapositively: if I identify the quale of my experience in the appropriate sense, and yet know nothing of the firing of my neurons, then the quale of my experience cannot have been essentially the property of being an event of C-firing. A materialist cannot accept the Identification Thesis [the

²⁷⁸ Lewis 1995, p. 142.

²⁷⁹ The revelation thesis is often used to contest physicalism.

revelation thesis]. If qualia are physical properties of experiences, experiences in turn are physical events, then it is certain that we seldom, if ever, identify the qualia of our experiences. Making discoveries in neurophysiology is not that easy!²⁸⁰

Again, this conclusion is, at first glance, only a threat from the physicalist's point of view. The revelation thesis in general however is seen as a strong interpretation of an epistemic principle²⁸¹. It therefore seems reasonable to believe that if revelation is true, then it constitutes certainty in the strong sense.

II.4. Is revelation an alternative account for self-knowledge about the phenomenal?

There are reasons to believe that revelation can constitute an account of privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal that may be considered a real alternative to the acquaintance approach. However, to count as such an alternative, revelation has to fulfill the following two conditions: first, revelation has to constitute a strong form of certainty and second, to do so it cannot rely on an acquaintance relation in the sense discussed in the previous chapter.

II.4.1. Certainty

So far we have seen that the strongest version of certainty is based on infallibility and omniscience. In the case of phenomenal properties, infallibility and omniscience state something like this:

One is infallible about one's own phenomenal properties of an experience iff one, after

²⁸⁰ Lewis 1995, p. 142.

²⁸¹ See e.g. Byrne & Hilbert 2007, Damjanovic 2012, Lewis 1995, Russell 1967, Stoljar 2009 and Strawson 1989.

careful introspection, cannot form or have a false belief that one has an experience with those phenomenal properties.

One is omniscient about one's own phenomenal properties of an experience iff having an experience with those phenomenal properties, and carefully introspecting them, is sufficient for knowing them.²⁸²

We may, however, want to qualify both ideas by tying them to the 'essence' or 'nature' claim²⁸³ about experience with certain phenomenal properties. By doing so we get the following interpretations:

Infallibility: If after carefully introspecting an experience with certain phenomenal properties, it seems to be in the nature of those phenomenal properties that p , then it is in the nature of those phenomenal properties that p .

Self-intimation: If it is in the nature of the phenomenal properties of an experience that p , then after carefully introspecting an experience with those phenomenal properties, it seems to be in the nature of those phenomenal properties that p .²⁸⁴

Now, tying both epistemic principles to the 'essence' claim is not a simple task. At this point, it is far from clear how to interpret the 'essence' or 'nature' claim of revelation. I will get to this problem in a minute. For the moment, I simply assume that it is possible to satisfy this claim and evaluate the thesis's alternative interpretation of certainty. Qualifying both claims has the advantage that if feasible, we get an interpretation that is tied to the revelation thesis.

²⁸² For an equivalent, unrestricted interpretation about mental states in general see Gertler 2011b.

²⁸³ For reasons of simplification, I will use 'essence' or 'nature' synonymously.

²⁸⁴ These interpretations are restatements of the above interpretations by Byrne & Hilbert 2007, applied to experience itself. At this point, I do not want to dispute their original idea that revelation entails minimal primitivism about colors. It is obviously a major problem for revelation about experiences themselves to be compatible with physicalism. This issue will be discussed in length in the next chapter.

In the case of infallibility we only narrow the scope of the thesis and therefore in what cases it is valid. The unqualified infallibility thesis about phenomenal properties of an experience states that – after careful introspection – one cannot be wrong about the fact that one has an experience *with* certain phenomenal properties. The infallibility thesis about the phenomenal restricted by the 'essence' claim, holds that – after careful introspection – if something seems for someone to be in the essence of certain phenomenal properties, then it is in the essence of those phenomenal properties. Now, what is exactly the difference between the former and the latter interpretation? When the unqualified infallibility thesis is applied to an experience, someone may not know if the object of that experience really exists or what causes her experience, she may however know that she has some sort of phenomenal appearance. So, after careful introspection, she cannot have a false belief about this phenomenal presence in general. In the case of the restricted infallibility thesis, this kind of knowledge might not apply. One is only infallible about the essential properties which constitute such a phenomenal appearance. Most readers may see no immediate difference or practical consequence²⁸⁵, but it should at least be clear that infallibility in the latter sense does not hold for all properties, it only holds for those we consider to be essential.

Qualifying the omniscience claim works quite similarly. There is however a small terminological difference. In the unqualified case, this epistemic principle states that if someone has certain phenomenal properties instantiated – and after careful introspection – this fact is sufficient for that someone to know those phenomenal properties. The self-intimation claim or the restricted version of this principle ties this general idea to the 'essence' claim again. Self-intimation interpreted this way basically means that if something is in the nature of certain phenomenal properties instantiated by someone – and after careful introspection – then it seems, for that someone, to be in the nature of those phenomenal properties. Again, in the former interpretation one may not know what caused the relevant experience, but simple having a phenomenal appearance – and carefully introspecting on it – is sufficient to know it in general. In the latter, restricted version, this idea applies only to the nature of such a phenomenal

²⁸⁵ We will see, however, that this issue depends on what I hold to be essential.

appearance, therefore tying it to the essential properties.

I stated above that there is a small terminological distinction to be made. When qualifying the omniscience thesis, it is no longer appropriate to call it that way. The reason is that being omniscient about a property or state, seems to involve a sense of global application. This means it does not apply to part of the property or state, but to all of it. Self-intimation may sound weak, but I suggest keeping the term anyway, especially because it was already introduced into the literature by Byrne & Hilbert.²⁸⁶ The term, at least, does not seem to involve global application and may therefore be applied to the restricted version of this epistemic principle.

The important question however is still open. Does revelation constitute a strong form of certainty or not? Since revelation includes both, the infallibility and the self-intimation claim²⁸⁷, it depends on the plausibility of those qualified interpretations. At a first glance, we can at least assume that both epistemic principles, in their restricted form, limit the scope of a strong certainty claim, but not the strength of the claim itself. Of course it is now necessary to assess the scope, by discussing different possibilities for the 'essence' claim. Revelation however may, in general, ground strong certainty.

II.4.2. Revelation and acquaintance

We have seen that the revelation thesis, just as acquaintance, goes back to Bertrand Russell. For him, both views²⁸⁸ are strongly related. In his famous passage about color properties, cited above, Russell states that seeing a color already puts him in a position to know the color itself. Or to put it in different words, having a visual color experience puts him in the position to know the essence of that particular color. Anything else we may learn about the color, i.e. any new knowledge of truths about that color we obtain, does not improve our knowledge about the color itself. One

²⁸⁶ See Byrne & Hilbert 2007.

²⁸⁷ See *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ See e.g. Campbell 2009 and Johnston 1992.

standard interpretation of this passage²⁸⁹ claims that a version of the revelation thesis about color properties – not phenomenal properties – is postulated here. This here endorsed claim about color properties states that the knowledge we obtain is complete knowledge of the color properties themselves. At a first glance, complete knowledge can mean many things. According to Campbell however this idea is often misunderstood. In his view the issue should be interpreted exclusively in the following manner:

The trouble with this whole exegetical line is that Russell's comment is being interpreted as a remark about the relation between experience and propositional knowledge of the essences or natures of colors. This misses the point that Russell's remark was about knowledge of things, rather than knowledge of truths. Acquaintance with the colors is not a matter of possessing propositional knowledge about them. It is a matter of having knowledge of the thing, not knowledge of truths about natures or essences.²⁹⁰

A plausible interpretation is therefore that the revelation thesis is about knowledge by acquaintance, therefore stating that it is this type of knowledge which is complete. This means, to know the 'essence' or 'nature' of the color properties is to have complete knowledge by acquaintance of them, making the revelation thesis therefore a demanding acquaintance account. Now, according to Campbell, that is what Russell really intended. He did want not to claim that by having a visual color experience we come to know all essential propositional truths about a color; it is rather that by encountering the particular color in our visual experience we obtain complete knowledge by acquaintance of the color property itself.

Even though this version of revelation concerns what experiences are about, namely color properties, one may construe a similar interpretation for experiences themselves. Damnjanovic, for example, postulates a possible version of the acquaintance approach to revelation that puts one in the position to know the essence

²⁸⁹ See e.g. Campbell 2009, Damnjanovic 2012 and Johnston 1997.

²⁹⁰ Campbell 2009, p. 661.

of phenomenal properties. It may be spelled out the following manner:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to have or have complete knowledge by acquaintance of Q.²⁹¹

Now, clearly this interpretation of revelation is in Campbell's spirit. It is about *having complete knowledge by acquaintance* of the phenomenal property Q in question. Also, the thesis does not make any assumptions about propositional knowledge of essential truths. It is therefore up to the acquaintance theorist to spell out the details of this proposal. In the preceding chapter, I suggested that acquaintance in the strong sense is either not compatible with physicalism – and in the end therefore deeply mysterious – or only a restatement of the privileged access intuition. In the weaker sense it is synonymous with the experience thesis and therefore a condition for knowledge about phenomenal properties. What does this mean for this interpretation of the revelation thesis?

The strong sense of acquaintance already seems to be incompatible with the Levineian Materialist Constraint or just a restatement of the *privileged access* intuition²⁹². As seen above, there is, however, a similar doubt about revelation. Lewis states that a physicalist should resist the thesis even though it seems to be embedded into folk-psychology. As stated above his criticism concerns the issue that if revelation and physicalism are true, then revelation should reveal that, in the case of pain, it is also C-fiber firing. Since this is an absurd claim, revelation is not compatible with physicalism.²⁹³

At a first glance, it seems that this version of the revelation thesis is therefore in double jeopardy. On the one hand, the thesis is compromised by any strong

²⁹¹ Strongly based on Damjanovic 2012.

²⁹² In this case, the interpretation of the acquaintance account as a restatement of the *privileged access* makes little sense. The *privileged access* refers to a) certainty and b) introspection. I argued, however, that in the end everything stands and falls with a). Revelation, of course, is supposed to explain certainty in the strong sense by entailing qualified forms of infallibility and self-intimation. It seems absurd to re-introduce unqualified accounts of infallibility and omniscience into the thesis due to the acquaintance restatement claim or – even if qualifying the account – create a vicious circle.

²⁹³ See Lewis 1995 again.

acquaintance approach. On the other hand, revelation endangers itself. This is however only the case if one wants to avoid anti-physicalism at all cost. An alternative strategy, however, might be especially promising for this account. So far, I assumed in Lewis's spirit that revelation should not be endorsed since it asks for a 'demanding and literal' sense of knowing what. Assuming the truths of physicalism and revelation about qualia, one should therefore know how those qualia are realized in the brain. If, on the contrary, one cannot know how qualia are realized in the brain, then this brain process is not essential to the qualia. It is clear that this consequence is absurd for Lewis. A supporter of the revelation thesis about experiences themselves in the Campbellian sense combined with a strong interpretation of the acquaintance relation, may however think that this to expect. At this point, I want to remind the reader what was said about the connection between the acquaintance relation and phenomenal properties. There is a perfectly viable explanation that does not describe the acquaintance relation as basic in the Levineian sense. The acquaintance theorist simply needs to resist strong transparency and argue that phenomenal properties are not completely representational in character. The consequently resulting independent ontological status of phenomenal properties, assumed in this approach, is able to justify and explain the acquaintance relation by tying a certain introspective judgment about those properties to the phenomenal reality itself. This interpretation of phenomenal properties is often assumed to be incompatible with physicalism.²⁹⁴ Therefore, on this view revelation shows that brain processes are not essential to phenomenal properties and anti-physicalism is true. Even though this might be considered a possible solution, at least for some philosophers, it does not change a second issue. This version of revelation cannot genuinely count as an alternative explanation since it entails knowledge by acquaintance. The goal however is to find a real alternative to the acquaintance approach. The obvious reason is that this interpretation of revelation confronts the same problem: it is incompatible with physicalism.

There may however be an alternative approach to pair revelation with a strong

²⁹⁴ As seen in the last chapter, Gertler argues that the independent status of phenomenal properties is the best explanation to ground the acquaintance approach and is, therefore, clearly incompatible with physicalist accounts. For detailed discussion on the issue see Gertler 1999.

account of acquaintance. As seen in the previous chapter, Levine does not only claim that one should not appeal to basic mental properties, one should also not refer to basic relations as well.²⁹⁵ In the latter case acquaintance seems even more mysterious²⁹⁶. Now, I started this illustration with Damnjanovic's interpretation of Campbell's idea and it seems to me, at this point, that this idea may ask, in the end, for something closer to Conee's answer to the knowledge argument discussed in the last chapter. In both cases, knowledge by acquaintance constitutes clearly a third, independent type of knowledge. It can neither be reduced to propositional knowledge nor to knowing-how, but it is compatible with physicalism. However, since Conee's approach was already rejected, there needs to be a decisive difference between his approach and the one endorsed by Campbell/Damnjanovic, to make the latter a viable possibility. And as a matter of fact, this difference exists.

Conee's approach argues, on the one hand, close to the acquaintance theorist's idea that this kind of knowledge can only be obtained by a maximal direct relation with an experience. On the other hand, he thinks that even though knowledge by acquaintance is knowledge in its own right, it does not constitute the basis for propositional knowledge nor knowing-how. The price this account pays is that acquaintance can only be interpreted in the weak sense. As seen in the last chapter, this means that acquaintance is identical to the experience thesis. For a version of the revelation thesis, this interpretation of acquaintance leads to an implausible result. Revelation interpreted in this manner would state something like this:

When having an experience with phenomenal property Q, we are in the position to know, about phenomenal property Q, that the experience has to be instantiated.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ See Levine 2007.

²⁹⁶ Unless it is interpreted in the sense that it is a restatement of the *privileged access* intuition. Since I have already excluded this version of acquaintance, due to its implausibility, this move is not available to this model of revelation.

²⁹⁷ This version of the revelation thesis is an adaption of the acquaintance interpretation above. See Damnjanovic 2012.

Assuming that this thesis does not consist in a vicious circle from the start, the only thing it states is that the experience thesis is a necessary condition to have knowledge about phenomenal properties. This, however, implies no epistemic position to know the 'essence' of a phenomenal property. It only implies that we can know some condition to obtain knowledge about phenomenal property Q. Even if this condition is essential to know Q, it is still not about the 'essence' of Q. In my opinion therefore, this thesis can hardly be considered a version of the revelation thesis about the essence of phenomenal properties.

Campbell's position towards acquaintance, on the contrary, maintains Russell's approach and insists that knowledge by acquaintance is the basis for propositional knowledge. To do so, Campbell broadens the consciousness relation. He seems to think that in most of the literature consciousness of an object is described as a two-place relation between an experiencing subject and an object. His view, however, claims this to be false and states the following:

We should think of consciousness of the object not as a two-place relation between a person and an object, but as a three-place relation between a person, a standpoint, and an object. You always experience an object from a standpoint. And you can experience one and the same object from different standpoints.²⁹⁸

This notion of standpoint supplements the traditional two-place relation. According to Campbell, this notion secures the introduction of a form of knowledge of things more basic than knowledge of truths. The notion of standpoint therefore assures the possibility of acquaintance. Campbell justifies this idea by explaining that “[t]he notion of a standpoint comes in because you can have knowledge of one and the same thing from different standpoints.”²⁹⁹

To give a characterization of what he means, Campbell proceeds with an example.³⁰⁰ To describe the perception of e.g. the Taj Mahal, Campbell claims that we

²⁹⁸ Campbell 2009, p. 657.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 658.

³⁰⁰ Campbell discusses some prior clarifications first. He establishes two different notions of identity,

have to first decide which sensory modality we want to account for. Assuming that we choose to explain the standpoint in visual perception, we need to account for many visual parameters, like position, distance, lightning conditions and so on. Even though, according to Campbell, we usually do not spell out all these different conditions for the notion of standpoint, his thesis shows that it influences our knowledge about experiences. The problem to be explained then, is simple the fact that naturally we can have different perspectives of the same object or property, but at the same time one can experience an object or property in only one way.³⁰¹ Of course, this is not to say that experiencing an object or property from one standpoint in one particular way means that sameness or the unity of the object or property is lost. This is, according to Campbell, why Russell introduces the role of standpoint in the following way:

[...] we keep the idea that we should characterize consciousness in Moore's terms, as the holding of a generic relation between the self and an object. But we should restrict the range of the relation.³⁰²

The conclusion being that what restricts this relation is the standpoint. This idea ensures that the reference of the object or property is fixed by explicating that we experience the object or property in only one way.

Campbell's solution is almost complete. The only thing missing is to determine to what kind of objects or properties one can restrict this three-way relation. According to Campbell this may be solved in the following manner:

We should keep it restricted to objects of which the subject automatically has comprehensive knowledge. This in effect was the solution adopted by Russell and Moore, when they talked of direct awareness as a relation between the subject and a

one that is informative, and, therefore, surpasses the mere logical law of identity, and a second one that is uninformative, and, therefore, simply is the logical law of identity. He thinks that without these basic conditions, it is not possible to introduce a substantial characterization of standpoint. One could engage in extensive discussion about the issue. I, however, think it is enough to roughly understand what Campbell means by standpoint to also understand his account of acquaintance. For detailed discussion on the issue see Campbell 2009.

³⁰¹ This excludes the popular view – which Campbell attributes to Frege – that we experience objects in different ways. See Campbell 2009.

³⁰² Campbell 2009, p. 656.

sense-datum.³⁰³

This means, in my opinion, Campbell restricts knowledge of things in the Russellian sense to objects or properties directly present in experience. Since there is only *one way* we experience an object or property from a particular standpoint in our experiences – where all conditions can be spelled out, but in practice are not – we have automatic, direct and comprehensive knowledge of the thing, which is essentially more basic than knowledge of truths. This is also the reason, why knowledge of things or knowledge by acquaintance constitutes the basis for propositional knowledge. The epistemic contact is established by the acquaintance relation, the direct relation to the objects or properties present in experience. Knowledge of truths depends on this relation, since without it, propositional knowledge has no reference.

Now, let me get back to revelation and phenomenal properties. Campbell argues that revelation in the Russellian tradition claims that one is in the position to have complete knowledge of the thing or complete knowledge by acquaintance. As pointed out before, in the case of phenomenal properties, this means one is in the position to have complete knowledge by acquaintance of these properties.³⁰⁴ As we have seen, since both types of knowledge are independent there seems to be no clash with physicalism. Campbell himself seems to think something similar by claiming the following:

To say that knowledge of the thing is complete is not of itself to deny the possibility of there being further propositional knowledge to be had to the effect that this thing has certain essential features. These further essential features, of which we have propositional knowledge, may indeed be physical, or of some sort quite unsuspected by the naive observer.³⁰⁵

As far as I can see, Campbell makes three important claims. First, he thinks that revelation is only about knowledge by acquaintance. Second, knowledge by acquaintance and propositional knowledge are independent. And third – based on

³⁰³ Campbell 2009, p. 656.

³⁰⁴ See especially Damjanovic 2012.

³⁰⁵ Campbell 2009, p. 661.

what we have seen before – propositional knowledge depends on knowledge by acquaintance. Interesting enough is the fact that Campbell also thinks that there is no conflict with physicalism. It is important to stress again that this thesis is stronger than Conee's account. The crucial difference is that Campbell sets his interpretation up like most contemporary acquaintance theorists do. In my opinion therefore, Campbell is bound to the idea that knowledge by acquaintance secures some profound insight about the object or property involved. On the contrary to Conee, then, Campbell's account of acquaintance seems to imply a strong reading of acquaintance and, in his opinion, this version of revelation is still compatible with physicalism. The reason is that, other philosophers who try to make sense of revelation³⁰⁶ miss Russell's initial point.

The trouble with this whole exegetical line is that Russell's comment is being interpreted as a remark about the relation between experience and propositional knowledge of the essences or natures of colours. This misses the point that Russell's remark was about knowledge of things, rather than knowledge of truths. Acquaintance with the colours is not a matter of possessing propositional knowledge about them.³⁰⁷

That being said, it all crumbles down to the question of whether or not one can support the strong acquaintance claim and still maintain physicalism.³⁰⁸

As we have seen, Conee's disadvantage, on the one hand, is that knowledge by acquaintance is not the basis for propositional knowledge, therefore leaving the acquaintance relation too weak for any contemporary acquaintance theorist. The advantage, of course, it is compatible with physicalism. Campbell, on the other hand, insists in the Russellian approach and therefore that knowledge by acquaintance is the foundation for propositional knowledge. This last remark however makes him vulnerable to Nida-Rümelin's following comment:

³⁰⁶ Campbell mentions explicitly Byrne & Hilbert 2007, Johnston 1997 and Lewis 1997.

³⁰⁷ Campbell 2009, p. 661.

³⁰⁸ Since I am interested in the revelation thesis about experiences themselves, the following comments will concern the phenomenal interpretation of Campbell's thesis. I am convinced that my arguments are also valid for the alternative account of revelation. It is, however, not necessary to discuss the issue here.

A friend of the knowledge argument might concede that a person is acquainted with *Q* only if she has or had an experience with property *Q* but he would have to insist that being acquainted with *Q* in that sense is a necessary condition for being able to know (in the relevant sense) that an experience has *Q*.³⁰⁹

As a reminder, the knowledge argument claims that physicalism is false. In my opinion, Campbell, however, has to believe the above statement to be true. Especially the second part claims that being acquainted with a phenomenal property is necessary for knowledge that an experience has that particular property. Since this is new propositional knowledge that Mary learns when leaving the black and white room, physicalism is false. In my opinion Campbell still has to maintain Nida-Rümelin's argument. Therefore, if certain philosophers make the mistake to think that revelation in the Russellian sense is connected to knowledge of truths and claim that the thesis is incompatible with physicalism, Campbell makes the mistake to believe that his interpretation of revelation as 'complete knowledge by acquaintance of phenomenal properties' is compatible with physicalism. The reason is that acquaintance interpreted this way, entails – as can be shown by an analysis of the knowledge argument – that physicalism is false. Campbell can therefore choose between two options: either concede that acquaintance is not compatible with physicalism or withdraw the claim that knowledge by acquaintance is the basis for propositional knowledge.³¹⁰ So far, knowing the 'essence' interpreted as having complete knowledge by acquaintance of the phenomenal properties has failed. To really let justice prevail, there is, in my opinion, a final possible solution for this interpretation of revelation to be considered.

³⁰⁹ Nida-Rümelin 2010, § 4.5.

³¹⁰ For reasons of completeness I want to add that there may be doubts about Campbell's original thesis as well. Campbell seems to think – just like Russell and Moore – that we have automatic, direct and comprehensive knowledge of things. This is captured by his view of the standpoint which ensures that we can have an experience in only *one* particular way. Campbell's thought is captured by his above statement about how to restrict Moore's two-place relation characterization of consciousness. The statement basically claims that only objects which lead to immediate knowledge may be considered. However, this is, in my opinion, not much of an explanation. To say that a subject obtains immediate knowledge about some objects seems to be just as obscure as all the other characterizations of the acquaintance relation. I think that without further clarification Campbell does not have much of an explanation of what acquaintance is in the first place.

Even though Campbell thinks that most other contemporary philosophers interpret the essence claim of revelation to be about knowledge of truths, Johnston explicitly tries to give an alternative account of knowledge by acquaintance. Since Johnston agrees that the Russellian interpretation of essence of a property as having complete knowledge by acquaintance of that property is dubious, he tries to operationalize the acquaintance relation³¹¹. By operationalizing this account, he concludes something interesting about this view, namely that acquaintance comes in degrees. One important consequence is, therefore, that complete revelation of the essence of properties is not necessary for an acquaintance relation with those properties. In the case of color properties, Johnston assumes two possible interpretations. To apply this notion of acquaintance to the secondary quality account of colors means that color vision acquaints us with the response disposition – which are the colors in this theory – without portraying them as dispositions. Pairing this interpretation of acquaintance with the primary account of colors leaves us with descriptions of the effects of those properties. Since on this view, we can only obtain propositional knowledge of the physical causes of color experiences, vision acquaints us only with those effects; the colors are so to speak invisible.³¹²

This leads to two questions: i) can we formulate such an operational account of acquaintance about phenomenal properties? ii) Does this account save this reading of revelation? To explore whether or not i) is an option, consider Johnston's operationalization of the acquaintance relation with certain properties again. The basic idea is that being acquainted with the essence of certain properties, one can know resemblance and difference relations between those properties. This knowledge does neither depend on knowledge of laws in which those properties are engaged, nor on the knowledge which entities possess those properties. To make sense of this idea, one may pair such an account of acquaintance with approaches to the phenomenal. I suggest conducting this debate in the context of strong/weak transparency. On the one side, weak transparency suggests that even though an experience is in general representational, there are some features of phenomenal properties which are not. On the other side, strong transparency holds that a description of an experience is

³¹¹ For Johnston's detailed idea see page 69, footnote 268 and Johnston 1992.

³¹² For further discussion see Johnston 1992.

exhausted simply by reference to its representational content. The former ontology suggests that there is more to a perceptual experience than its object. The latter, on the contrary, claims that a perceptual experience *only* depends on the features of the perceived object.

When paired with the strong account of transparency, the operational approach to acquaintance seems to amount to knowledge about the world. Since all properties are depending on the representational character of the object of the experience, the type of knowledge an acquaintance relation amounts to, depends on the view one has about the objects of experience. The resemblance and difference relations between e.g. phenomenal redness and phenomenal blueness are cashed out in purely representational terms. Since this approach maintains that these phenomenal qualities are qualities of the object, knowledge about phenomenal properties depend entirely on the object of experience. Interestingly, this approach leaves us, in the case of visual color experiences, with the original options implied by Johnston.

Combining weak transparency with the operational account of acquaintance opens the possibility for direct access to the phenomenal. Since phenomenal properties, in the weak transparency view, are only partially representational – and therefore do not entirely depend on the object of experience – there is room for a proper, unique acquaintance relation to those properties and therefore direct knowledge of the properties themselves. In this case, the resemblance and difference relations between e.g. phenomenal redness and phenomenal blueness are solely dependent on those phenomenal properties themselves. For such a special directness relation to be possible, everything stands and falls with the ontological status of conscious experiences and their phenomenal properties.

With this background in mind, we may consider ii). Does the operational account of acquaintance help to save this interpretation of revelation? The short answer is no. In my opinion, there are two reasons why this account is in no better shape than the ones before. The first problem concerns the pair of strong transparency and the operational account of acquaintance. In the previous chapter I argued that strong transparency violates the spirit of acquaintance. Judgments about phenomenal

properties depend in the end not on those properties, but on the objects of experience. Now, even if one assumes that this does not necessarily lead to trouble, the resulting account is again arguable. Leaving out Johnston's discussion about the nature of colors, objects external to the mind, should in some sense be constituted by physical properties. Since phenomenal properties depend solely on the objects of experience, they have to be considered being physical properties as well. Considering the knowledge argument, we may conclude that all physical knowledge is propositional knowledge or knowledge of truths. If phenomenal properties are physical properties, then our knowledge about those properties is propositional as well. Since, according to Campbell and Russell, this is not meant by knowledge by acquaintance, the only viable alternative is to interpret the acquaintance approach in the weak sense and therefore as synonymous to the experience thesis. As argued before, acquaintance interpreted in this sense cannot lead to a viable reading of the revelation thesis.

The second issue with the operational account of acquaintance becomes clear by considering the approach combined with weak transparency. The obvious trade-off for such a unique acquaintance relation is that the whole thesis is not compatible with physicalism again. Since ontological independent or basic phenomenal properties violate the Levineian Materialist Constraint, one may obtain a viable acquaintance thesis, mystifying however phenomenal properties. The resulting revelation account is the one I started with by considering the essence claim as complete knowledge by acquaintance. A thesis in this spirit basically states that anti-physicalism about phenomenal properties is essentially true.

In general, I think, the operational account of acquaintance fails because it *only* restricts acquaintance to certain similarity and difference relations. It brings nothing new to the table besides weakening the application. Johnston's account, therefore, does not put acquaintance in any better position. His personal interpretation of the acquaintance-revelation relation is stated in quite a bloomy manner:

Part of my pleasure in seeing color is not simply the pleasure of undergoing certain experiences but the pleasure of having access to the natures of those features of external things that

are the colors.³¹³

Since Johnston, of course, subscribes to weakening the acquaintance approach, in my opinion, acquaintance loses part of its charm.

In the beginning of the discussion about revelation and acquaintance I said that the 'essence claim' interpreted as complete knowledge by acquaintance is not really an alternative to the acquaintance thesis in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, revelation and acquaintance can be traced back to the same origin. For Russell, both ideas are so intimately linked that making sense of the revelation's 'essence claim' has to explore this interpretation first. Of course, if one argues in this respect that the acquaintance relation is dubious or mysterious at best, then revelation inherits all these problems. Nothing that revelation adds will make those problems go away. Despite the similarities and deep relatedness of both approaches, it is not necessary for revelation to depend on the acquaintance thesis. At this point, it should be explored how revelation can emancipate itself from its descent. To count as a real alternative to the acquaintance thesis as an explanation of the *privileged access* to the phenomenal, revelation should preserve all the benefits and eliminate all the threads of the previous approach. In the spirit of this idea, it should be especially examined whether there is a viable version of revelation that is compatible with physicalism. To do so means in my opinion, to evaluate what the revelation thesis is about and discuss alternative interpretations which do not violate physicalism.

³¹³ Johnston 1992, p. 257.

III. INTERPRETING THE REVELATION THESIS

In this chapter I want to evaluate whether the revelation thesis may be considered an alternative explanation for the *privileged access*. To evaluate whether or not this thesis is a viable possible option, I will first consider what the revelation thesis claims. As a second step, I will try make sense of the most controversial idea, namely the essence claim. The basic thought behind this move is to eliminate implausible interpretations of the revelation thesis.

III.1. Readings and meanings of revelation

Up to this point I assumed that it is crystal clear what is meant when we talk about revelation. I pointed out that the revelation thesis may be interpreted in the following two manners: first, the thesis's essence claim is about properties closely related to experiences (e.g. colors) and second, revelation makes essence claims about experiences themselves. Clearly, revelation is interpreted in the second sense here. According to Stoljar, however, there are different meanings of revelation. For him, there are at least five different issues that need clarification. In my opinion, three of those problems may be considered preliminary and shall be settled without extensive discussion. The remainder can be divided in the core issue, namely to make sense of the essence claim, and whether revelation is really a claim about experience itself or about the understanding of what an experience is. Before discussing the core problem, I will try to settle the minor issues swiftly and clarify what the revelation thesis's claim is really about. To discuss the above issues, here is, as a reminder, the unqualified revelation thesis about experience again:

By having an experience, I am in a position to know or know the essence of that experience.³¹⁴

³¹⁴ This interpretation is based on Stoljar 2009.

III.1.1. Preliminary issues

A first minor detail concerns whether one should understand the revelation thesis to state that one is 'in the position to know' the subject matter or that one plainly 'knows' it. According to Stoljar, it seems rather appropriate to assume that we are 'in the position to know'. Clearly this interpretation is weaker and may be buffered by conditioning the circumstances of being 'in the position to know'. That is to say, it seems less controversial. Stoljar however thinks that this version comes with a downside. The epistemic position one is in becomes less tenable. To maintain this extraordinary position, one has to spell out the exact conditions for this version. In my opinion, in the case of experience, this depends largely on one's view of the epistemic access to our experiences. Many would agree that such an access is introspection. This means our special epistemic position depends on one's detailed view of introspection. As shown in the previous chapter however, introspection, at least in this context, depends largely on the force of the epistemic principle that is revelation. At this point, one may think that such an idea leads to circularity. It however does not. It is one thing to consider the revelation thesis to ground *privileged access*; it is another to give a detailed account of introspection. Since I have shown in the last chapter that, in principle, the development of an introspective approach should be considered possible, I will assume from this point on that the weaker notion of revelation is tenable as well. That 'one is in the position to know' therefore seems to be a reasonable interpretation.³¹⁵ This less controversial interpretation of our epistemic position is sufficient for revelation to get off the ground.³¹⁶ Since I do not think, however, that a lot hangs on the decision between both alternatives, at least for the validity of revelation thesis, we may leave both possible options open at this point.

³¹⁵ This is not to say that 'one knows' is not an option. This depends on one's view about the epistemic access to experiences. Non-observational or rational views about introspection hold that a given mental state is constitutive for the corresponding judgment. Shoemaker seems to think that rational beings are simply wired the way that mental states in certain contexts constitute beliefs about them. For detailed discussion e.g. Shoemaker 1994a, b. Further proponents include e.g. Gallois 1996.

³¹⁶ I think, however, if it turns out that one is in the stronger epistemic position then this is no threat to revelation. On the contrary, if the stronger version turns out to be true, revelation becomes even more robust.

This means, one either 'knows' or is 'in the position to know'.

A second preliminary issue for Stoljar is that it may not be as straightforward to interpret the essence claim as it was assumed so far. In his view, one problematic interpretation of revelation leads to the idea that one already needs to have a concept of essence. If interpreted in this latter manner, then revelation is construed as knowing *that E is the essence of that experience*. This contrasts a simpler reading of the thesis, where revelation is interpreted as knowing *that this experience is E* and E is, as a matter of fact, the essence of the experience. On the less demanding reading, a concept of essence is not necessary. Of course it seems to be correct, at this point, that the simpler interpretation is true. It seems odd to assume that one needs a 'concept of essence' to experience e.g. a tickle.³¹⁷ Still, we will see in the next chapter that this issue is not as innocent as it seems. However, I think that for now we may assume Stoljar's weaker claim as a working hypothesis and settle the issue in that chapter.

A final minor problem is according to Stoljar, whether revelation claims tacit or explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge in this context means that knowing the essence of an experience is 'before the mind'.³¹⁸ Even though Stoljar thinks that it is not clear how to characterize such a situation, it seems to me as if this interpretation could be explained by the idea of construing revelation as *knowing that E is the essence of that experience*. If one has a concept of essence, then one explicitly knows that E is the essence of that experience, or better, one has E 'before the mind'. This is, of course, a strange interpretation and leads, according to Stoljar, to the idea that "[...] those who are itchy have the essence of itchiness in the forefront of their minds."³¹⁹

If revelation concerns tacit knowledge, then the thesis predicts that one can know the essence of an experience, even though it is not clear to one that one knows it. I think this characterization may be explained by revelation interpreted as *knowing that this experience is E and E is in fact the essence of the experience*. For revelation to be true one only needs tacit knowledge that this experience is E, even if this means that one does not know that E is in fact the essence of the experience. Just as above, this version seems to suffice for revelation, but again, this idea is not unproblematic.

³¹⁷ For further details see Stoljar 2009.

³¹⁸ Stoljar 2009, p. 120.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

At this point, I will assume this interpretation and settle the next chapter.

As far as I can see, this should be sufficient for a characterization of what I called the preliminary remarks for an understanding of the revelation thesis. The original, unqualified thesis therefore states, at least, that one is 'in the position to know', which clearly suffices for a reasonable reading of revelation. I however think that at this point not much hangs on whether one prefers the epistemic position to claim that one 'knows' that one 'is in the position to know'. I will therefore maintain, for now, both possibilities explicitly. Only when laying out my version of the thesis, I will specifically re-visit this issue. Regarding the interpretation of the essence claim, I will assume, at this point, that constructing revelation as *knowing that this experience is E and E is, as a matter of fact, the essence of the experience* suffices for revelation. Since the interpretation of knowledge as tacit knowledge seems to go along with this previous idea, I will accept this reading as well. I will come back to this issue, however, in the next chapter.

III.1.2. E-revelation or u-revelation?

It was assumed so far that the revelation thesis in general may come in two versions. The first version is about what experiences are about or better properties closely linked to experiences, like e.g. colors. The second option concerns experience itself. Following Stoljar however, there is a third variant that may be understood as prior to the others. According to the first two options, revelation concerns the result of undergoing an experience. This result, as just stated, can refer either to properties closely connected to experiences or experiences themselves. Since this interpretation is concerned with what happens when we undergo an experience, Stoljar calls it e-revelation. In the here relevant context, namely experiences themselves, the theory states the following:

By having an experience E, I am in a position to know or know the essence of E.³²⁰

The third interpretation, considered as prior, is the so called u-revelation thesis. This thesis concerns the result of understanding what an experience is. The thesis may be stated the following way:

By understanding what an experience E is, I know or I am in a position to know the essence of E.³²¹

Both ideas are not identical, but in Stoljar's opinion, they are intimately related.

In the previous chapter I discussed other alternative epistemic principles. One of those alternatives is understanding. Understanding is clearly independent from revelation. However, it constitutes a condition for revelation in the following sense:

Understanding is necessary for revelation, for to say that one knows the essence of experience is to say at least that one understands what experiences are. But it is not sufficient, for it as yet an open possibility that one may understand an experience and yet not know its essence.³²²

The result is that e-revelation can only be constructed when combined with a third thesis about understanding.

By having an experience E, I thereby understand what experience E is.³²³

Clearly, the combination of u-revelation and the thesis about understanding result in e-revelation. This inquiry results, according to Stoljar, in two consequences. On the

³²⁰ Inspired by Stoljar 2009.

³²¹ Inspired by *ibid.*

³²² Stoljar 2009, pp. 117-118.

³²³ Inspired by Stoljar 2009.

one hand, e-revelation and u-revelation are not the same. On the other hand, u-revelation combined with the epistemic principle of understanding generates e-revelation. Stoljar's conclusion therefore is the following:

[T]he basic doctrine at issue here is u-revelation; e-revelation is something that follows from this basic doctrine together with the view that if you have an experience you understand it. To put this differently, revelation may be factored into two claims. The first claim is understanding, namely, that if you have an experience, then you understand what it is; the second claim is u-revelation, namely, that if you understand what an experience is, you know or are in position to know its essence.³²⁴

Basically this means that revelation initially interpreted as being about experience itself – and therefore what happens when we undergo those experiences – is in the end necessarily constituted by revelation about understanding what an experience is, or u-revelation, and the epistemic principle understanding.

The last chapter made it clear that the most important task of revelation is to give new credence to the *privileged access* in the sense of 1), that is to say it constitutes certainty. It was also explained that to obtain certainty in a strong sense, it is necessary to base it on the two strongest epistemic principles, namely infallibility and omniscience. Since revelation consists in qualified versions of those principles, it clearly suffices to achieve strong certainty. The crux is that privileged self-knowledge is usually secured by assuming an acquaintance relation between consciously present phenomenal properties and the corresponding judgments. However, since this relation is implausible – and including it as essence claim in the revelation thesis as well – grounding epistemic special self-knowledge has to be found in a somewhat different approach to revelation. However, according to what is claimed now, understanding has to be kept in mind as well, complicating the situation. The question therefore turns on whether or not revelation about experience itself is really based on understanding and u-revelation.

³²⁴ Stoljar 2009, p. 122.

Now, imagine what Stoljar concludes is true. This means - combined with what was said above – that every form of revelation entails the following three independent epistemic principles:

Infallibility: If after carefully introspecting on an experience with certain phenomenal properties it seems to be in the nature of those phenomenal properties that p , then it is in the nature of those phenomenal properties that p .

Self-intimation: If it is in the nature of the phenomenal properties of an experience that p , then after carefully introspecting on an experience with those phenomenal properties it seems to be in the nature of those phenomenal properties that p .

Understanding: A creature that is psychologically complex enough to undergo experiences with certain phenomenal properties is also psychologically complex enough to know what those phenomenal properties of an experience are.³²⁵

These principles explicitly satisfy Stoljar's initial claim that u-revelation is prior to e-revelation. In the case of phenomenal properties this means, assuming that one understands what an experience e with phenomenal property q is, then by revelation, one knows or is in the position to know (with infallibility) the nature of q . To convert this scenario to revelation about experience itself, one implements the epistemic principle understanding in the thesis. The result claims that by having an experience with phenomenal property q (self-intimation) – via understanding – one knows or is in a position to know (with infallibility) the nature of q . A general version of e-revelation may be formulated the following way:

³²⁵ This characterization is based on Stoljar 2009. This version is simplified in the sense that it misses the time dimension. Since nothing important depends on this issue – apart from restricting it to current conscious experiences which I assume for self-knowledge from start – I will keep to this simplified version.

By having an experience with phenomenal property q (self-intimation) – via understanding – I am in the position to know or know (with infallibility) the nature of q.

At a first glance, this seems to be an adequate solution for what e-revelation is.

There are however two problems with this interpretation. First, when examining the epistemic principles involved, there seems to be a difference in type. Now, it is common to all three principles that, in some sense, they describe the relation between phenomenal properties and the corresponding judgments or the self-knowledge relation. Infallibility suggests that a judgment about the nature of phenomenal property q cannot be wrong. Self-intimation claims that the phenomenal property q suffices for a judgment about the nature of q. And finally, understanding argues that a psychologically sufficient complex creature that undergoes phenomenal property q is also psychologically complex enough to know what q is.

The difference in type, however, should become clear from this description as well. While self-intimation and infallibility make epistemic claims, understanding makes a psychological claim. Self-intimation and infallibility, on the one hand, state the knowledge conditions for knowledge of phenomenal property q. Understanding, on the other hand, states the psychological conditions for knowledge about those properties. It is easy to see that the latter claim concerns psychology and therefore constitutes a difference in type. Both, understanding and self-intimation refer to the first part of revelation. If both were epistemic principles of the same type, then there should be a conflict. In my opinion however, there is no conflict. The reason is that self-intimation describes the epistemic function and understanding the psychological aspect. The epistemic function claimed by self-intimation is that 'by having an experience with phenomenal property q' is sufficient to form knowledge about the property in question. The psychological dimension, laid out by understanding, is that a psychologically sufficient complex creature that has 'an experience with phenomenal property q' is psychologically sufficiently complex to know what that phenomenal property q is.

Now, clearly self-intimation is *only* epistemic in nature. An epistemic principle claims nothing about what psychological conditions one needs for knowledge. Analyzed in a general manner, this principle states the following:

Being in a state X with property p suffices for knowledge about p.³²⁶

Understanding, however, stated in general terms, claims something like this:

A creature C psychologically sufficiently complex for being in a state X with property p
is psychologically sufficiently complex to know what that p is.

Clearly this type of claim is different from what is claimed by self-intimation. Understanding asserts something about the psychological conditions to obtain knowledge and not epistemic ones. In short, self-intimation states the epistemic conditions for knowledge, while understanding asserts psychological conditions for a creature to obtain knowledge. The confusion however is intelligible. Since we are concerned with psychological processes of some form, namely experiences and their phenomenal properties, it seems particularly easy to confuse both categories. In the end this means, Stoljar mixes up two types of principles: one being epistemic and the other one psychological. E-revelation therefore may depend also on understanding, but not epistemically, 'only' psychologically.

A second problem concerns the claim that e-revelation depends on u-revelation. In specific, it seems arguable that u-revelation really is a form of revelation. The key issue here, again, concerns self-intimation and understanding. In the previous chapter it was clearly stated that revelation entails two epistemic principles – infallibility and self-intimation – to guarantee certainty and therefore to secure *privileged access* to the phenomenal. But u-revelation misses one of those principles. As mentioned earlier, u-revelation concerns the understanding of an experience: if one

³²⁶ To avoid controversy I opted for a weak version of self-intimation. Since nothing hangs on the manner the epistemic principle is interpreted, it should be harmless to state it this way.

understands what an experience with phenomenal property *q* is, then one knows or is in the position to know the nature of *q*. Now, the second part of this interpretation of revelation is identical to all unqualified versions of revelation explained so far. It therefore entails infallibility. The first part, however, is based on the psychological principle understanding alone, claiming *only* the psychological conditions for knowledge about the phenomenal. This opens the door to the question about whether or not this suffices for revelation.

In the previous chapter, I defined revelation in the sense of Byrne and Hilbert. The thesis is constituted by a conjunction of infallibility and self-intimation.³²⁷ Clearly, u-revelation misses the latter. In my opinion, this leaves u-revelation with only two options. Both alternatives depend on whether or not understanding is, in the end, the basis of self-intimation or equivalent to it.³²⁸

The first option then states that both principles are equivalent in function. Of course, this does not mean that the two principles are identical. It seems absurd, since, as I explained above, one is an epistemic principle, while the other is a psychological principle. There is however still the possibility that both principles fulfill the same function, namely making sure that an experience with phenomenal property *q* suffices for knowledge of *q*. At a first glance, this may be the case. Self-intimation realizes this function in the epistemic sense: being in or having *q* suffices for knowledge of *q*. Understanding achieves a similar result: a creature sufficiently psychologically complex for being in or having *q* is a creature sufficiently psychologically complex to know what *q* is. A difference seems to arise only in the types of knowledge produced. While one claims propositional knowledge, the other assumes knowing what. This is however a minor difference. Since, according to Lewis³²⁹, revelation concerns knowing what, it should be no problem to restate self-intimation in the following manner: being in or having *q* suffices to know what *q* is.

³²⁷ See Byrne & Hilbert 2007.

³²⁸ There are two reasons this relation has to be this way, and not another: 1) u-revelation is the basis for e-revelation. Since self-intimation enters only at the level of e-revelation, it seems plausible to assume that understanding is prior to self-intimation; 2) while both principles have something to say about the relation between phenomenal properties and their corresponding judgments (or the self-knowledge relation), self-intimation has nothing to say about any kind of psychological involvement. If self-intimation were to be the basis for understanding, then the psychological component would be introduced somewhat *ad hoc*, or at least some deep explanation is in order.

³²⁹ See Lewis 1995.

Now, do both principles equally fulfill the task or not? The answer is no. On the one hand, self-intimation as an epistemic principle claims that the fact of being in or having *q* suffices for one to be in the position to know or to know what *q* is. This means this principle justifies that one's knowledge about what *q* is true, epistemically tying *q* to the judgment. The psychological principle understanding, on the other hand, is not concerned with justification of this kind. It rather refers to the sufficient psychological complexity of a creature for being in or having *q* and the corresponding knowledge. Understanding therefore is the psychological nexus for knowing what *q* is, by giving psychological conditions. Those conditions however do not lead to an epistemic connection between *q* and the corresponding judgment, therefore making it a weaker principle. In short the difference between both principles can be put the following way: while self-intimation justifies one's knowledge about 'what *q* is', understanding claims psychological conditions under which knowledge about 'what *q* is' possible. Since both principles are not functionally equivalent, and understanding is weaker than self-intimation, this interpretation fails to satisfy the conditions for revelation.

A second possibility may however arise by assuming what was said in the last paragraph, adding the idea that understanding is the explanation for self-intimation. As a psychological principle, understanding makes knowledge about what *q* is possible to begin with. By ensuring the necessary psychological capacities, this principle secures the relation between the psychological realization of *q* and the psychological realization of the corresponding judgment. Only if a creature is psychologically sufficiently complex to be in or have *q*, then that creature is psychologically complex to know what *q* is. This does not mean that the creature *necessarily* knows what *q* is, but it secures further epistemic claims. Self-intimation as an epistemic principle may now come into play justifying why being in or having *q* is sufficient for knowing what *q* is. Even though the nexus between both principles seems evident, it also seems clear that understanding is not an explanation for self-intimation. The reason is simple. Understanding does not open the door for *one* epistemic claim, but for many such claims. Whether self-intimation follows or any other epistemic principle³³⁰ is not determined by understanding. Understanding therefore may in general lead the way to

³³⁰ For a list of epistemic principles see the last chapter, Alston 1971 and Stoljar 2009.

the possibility of knowledge about what *q* is, but it cannot state what kind of epistemic justification is involved. Since revelation is an epistemic principle, psychological principles may be necessary to constitute knowledge, but understanding is not directly involved in constituting the revelation thesis. This is due to the fact that revelation is one *type* of principle and understanding a different type. Understanding may clearly form the necessary psychological basis for revelation, it does not form part of the revelation thesis itself. Since the revelation is epistemic in nature, u-revelation makes therefore no sense.

There is however one circumstance still to be explained. Stoljar assumes the truth of u-revelation for a reason. This reason stems from Lewis's thought that "[m]aybe revelation is true in some other cases - as it might be for the part-whole relation."³³¹ Stoljar explains this idea by invoking u-revelation, since, in this case, e-revelation makes no sense. He explains Lewis's notion in the following manner:

[...] [Lewis] is invoking u-revelation, and means that if you understand what the relation of whole and part is, you know the essence of the relation. More generally, since u-revelation is a thesis about understanding, and is not a thesis about experience, it might be applied without oddity to domains, such as whole and part, in which experience has no role.³³²

In my opinion, this is simply wrong. It confuses the two different types of principles. As argued so far, understanding cannot fulfill the functional role asked for by revelation.³³³ Now, there may be a good indicator for why it is largely assumed that revelation is about properties closely connected to experiences or about experiences themselves. The reason – maybe held implicitly – is closely connected to the scope of privileged self-knowledge. Most contemporary philosophers think that such knowledge can only be achieved of ongoing conscious experiences, and I assume that revelation is supposed to give us good reasons for why this is the case. The thesis therefore might

³³¹ Lewis 1997, p. 338, footnote 21.

³³² Stoljar 2009, p. 121.

³³³ Even though I did not argue for it explicitly in the last section, it should be clear that if understanding forms part of the revelation thesis, the thesis cannot maintain its high standards of certainty. Since understanding opens up the chance for a variety of epistemic claims – some of them weaker than others – it also introduces the possibility to weaken the certainty claim.

not be applicable in any other domains and there simply is no u-revelation. Whatever Lewis is invoking and Stoljar is defending, might be privileged knowledge of some sort. This idea might be closely related to the revelation thesis, it is however *not* revelation.

If what was said is right, then an unqualified revelation thesis means revelation as an epistemic principle that entails infallibility and self-intimation. Further, it seems, at least for now, reasonable to assume that for the thesis to be true, one does not need a concept of essence or nature and that knowledge obtained is tacit. As a final clarification it was claimed that, at this point, not much hangs on whether one is 'in the position to know' or one simply 'knows'. Revelation is a viable thesis in both cases. Of course, many implications follow from this decision, including one's detailed view about introspection. At this point, however, such details are not the issue. The more pressing question is whether or not revelation has a future to explain privileged self-knowledge.

III.2. The essence claim

So far, I have tried to make sense of the revelation thesis as a whole or better how we should read the thesis. In the remainder of this chapter, I will try to make sense of the core problem of revelation, i.e., how to understand the essence claim. One way of interpreting this claim was already discussed in the previous chapter, namely essence as complete knowledge by acquaintance. Since this reading of the claim proved unsatisfactory, other possibilities need to be explored.

III.2.1. Knowledge of all essential truths

Even though Campbell clearly states that revelation is not about knowledge of truths,³³⁴ this may however be a viable option. In his opinion, most critics³³⁵ assume that revelation is not compatible with physicalism, exactly because of this mistake.

³³⁴ See Campbell 2009. For the origins of this view see Russell 1967.

³³⁵ See e.g. Byrne & Hilbert 2007, Johnston 1997, Lewis 1995, 1997 and Stoljar 2009.

One of the most straight forward critiques, as we have seen, stems from Lewis, who holds that revelation about experiences themselves asks for an 'uncommonly demanding' interpretation of knowing what. If one assumes that a phenomenal property is essentially a physical property as well, then by revelation, I should get to know the exact physical instantiation of a particular phenomenal property simply by having the relevant experience.³³⁶ At a first glance, Lewis seems to be right and revelation is not compatible with physicalism. The question however arises whether one can solve this problem and propose a reasonable account of the revelation thesis. A first way of adapting the thesis may lie in the substitution of 'complete knowledge by acquaintance' with 'complete knowledge of truths'. The resulting revelation thesis states the following:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to have or have complete knowledge of truths about Q.³³⁷

This interpretation of revelation is obviously implausible. First of all, it is hard to believe that we can know every possible description of a phenomenal property just by having the relevant experience. Secondly, this version is clearly not compatible with physicalism.

Damnjanovic offers therefore a slightly different version. This new interpretation claims the following:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know all essential truths about Q.³³⁸

Even though this version of revelation limits the scope to 'all essential truths', it is, according to Damnjanovic, still not compatible with physicalism. Assuming that

³³⁶ See Lewis 1995.

³³⁷ This adapted version is based on the original idea of the revelation thesis and the 'complete knowledge by acquaintance' interpretation offered by Damnjanovic 2012.

³³⁸ Strongly based on Damnjanovic 2012.

physicalism is true, it is clearly essential to the phenomenal. One should therefore know something similar to Lewis's claim, namely the physical implementation. This means however that limiting the scope does not achieve the goal it is supposed to. The problem stems from the claim that one could possess 'knowledge of *all* essential truths about Q'. Even though one *only* needs to know the essential truths of Q, this version still claims that one needs to be all of them. To know all the essential truths however means that one needs to possess all possible concepts of Q, something that seems clearly impossible.³³⁹

To solve this problem, Damjanovic introduces a further constraint. This modified revelation thesis qualifies the scope even further. By adding the condition that one only has to know all those essential truths that one understands, this interpretation of revelation allows one to know the essence of phenomenal property Q without knowing all the essential truths about that property. One only needs to know those essential truths; one is capable to understand and therefore possesses a concept.³⁴⁰ Damjanovic himself however doubts this version. He thinks that it leads to a dilemma. To accept this version of the revelation thesis implies to promote *a posteriori* physicalism³⁴¹. *A posteriori* physicalism is the view that even if phenomenal properties are identical to physical properties, this fact can only be known *a posteriori*. As it turns out however, this interpretation of revelation cannot satisfy the conditions for this type of physicalism.

At a first glance, this version seems perfectly compatible with *a posteriori* physicalism and therefore a viable candidate. To explain this appearance, Damjanovic gives the following example:

I may know the full nature of Mohamed Ali. That is, I may come to know everything there is to know about his essence – including that he is human, perhaps who his parents are if

³³⁹ For detailed discussion see Damjanovic 2012.

³⁴⁰ Note that understanding here is not used in Stoljar's sense. Understanding only means that all relevant concepts for the essence of Q are the possessed concepts of Q. This latter meaning limits the scope for knowledge, Stoljar's use is designed to make knowledge possible in the first place.

³⁴¹ For detailed discussion, in the sense of phenomenal concepts, see e.g. Alter & Walter 2007, Balog 2009, Block 2007, Chalmers 2007, Hawthorne 2007, Horgan 1984, Levin 2007, Levine 2007, Loar 1990, 1997; Nida-Rümelin 2007a, Tye 1999, Papineau 2007, Perry 2001 and White 2007.

biological origins are essential, and so on. I may then acquire the concept CASSIUS CLAY, which rigidly designates the selfsame person. Nevertheless, it is easy to imagine that I acquire the latter concept in a way that I cannot work out, *a priori*, that Mohamed Ali is Cassius Clay. At least, it is hard to see why those who think that that identity statement is *a posteriori* should think that it must be *a priori* derivable for those who know the nature of Mohamed Ali.³⁴²

According to Damjanovic, this example shows clearly what the *a posteriori* physicalist is bound to. She needs to claim that knowing the essence of an entity does not entail knowledge about all co-existential concepts. This means, if one has a concept for the entity in question, then that person obtains a new co-existential concept, yet one still might not, *a priori*, know that those concepts are co-existential. The *a posteriori* physicalist therefore individuates concepts more fine-grained than facts³⁴³ and argues that one possessed concept of a property is enough for this type of revelation. When one has an experience with phenomenal property Q, it is sufficient for this interpretation to have only, say, phenomenal concepts of Q. But, since this view is a version of physicalism and it turns out *a posteriori* that Q is also physical (or better physical concepts of Q are obtained), something that one could not work out *a priori*, revelation as knowledge of essential truths seems to be compatible with physicalism.

Even though an elegant solution, this interpretation of revelation is an implausible candidate for *a posteriori* physicalism. According to Damjanovic, this version of the revelation thesis begs the question against *a posteriori* physicalism.

[The *a posteriori* physicalist] [...] holds that some phenomeno-physical identity statements may be necessary *a posteriori* truths which may not be derivable *a priori*. As the above example [...] *prima facie* suggest[s], an *a posteriori* physicalist should also hold that these statements are not derivable *a*

³⁴² Damjanovic 2012, p. 78.

³⁴³ In general, proponents of the new knowledge/old fact answer – often called the phenomenal concept strategy – to the knowledge argument maintain this claim. For detailed discussion see Nida-Rümelin 2010.

priori even by someone who knows the nature of the relevant property. [Therefore] [...] it is an inappropriate, question-begging way of interpreting *Revelation*.³⁴⁴

This is simply to say that it seems implausible that an *a posteriori* physicalist would defend that if one knows the nature of Mohamed Ali, she should not know *a priori* that he is identical to Cassius Clay, but only *a posteriori*. Since this is exactly what is at stake, one should not assume it from the start.

This restricted version of revelation seems, at first glance, to be exactly what we are asking for: a thesis that constitutes a pure epistemic principle, which can explain strong certainty and is compatible with physicalism. As it turns out however, for the kind of physicalist interpretation this revelation thesis would need, it is implausible, making the thesis unsustainable.

But is that really the case? I think that Damnjanovic gives up the thesis too easily. One needs to consider that most *a posteriori* physicalists state explicitly the specialness of phenomenal concepts³⁴⁵. Whether something similar applies to cases concerning non-phenomenal concepts seems to have only minor impact. As long as this interpretation of revelation only applies to the domain of the phenomenal, it may be perfectly reasonable. Since the basic reasoning of the *a posteriori* physicalist bounds this position to think that two co-existential concepts about some *phenomenal property* are not derivable *a priori*, it may be very well the case, at this point, that this version of revelation is compatible with physicalism. An analysis about what may be the problem of this approach in the next section will however expose several weaknesses, opening the door for a possible solution.

At this point, my personal opinion however suggests that the main problem of this version of the thesis stems from the fact that it clearly seems to be the case, that if physicalism is true, it is an essential truth and one ought to know it. I therefore think that it is implausible to pair this form of revelation with *a posteriori* physicalism a thesis that is in every context highly controversial³⁴⁶. Since Damnjanovic thinks that

³⁴⁴ Damnjanovic 2012, p. 79.

³⁴⁵ See e.g. Balog 2009, Loar 1990, 1997 and Papineau 2007.

³⁴⁶ For detailed criticism on the issue see e.g. Chalmers 2007, Nida-Rümelin 2007a and White 2007.

this account of revelation should be rejected because it begs the question against *a posteriori* physicalism, and I hold *a posteriori* physicalism to be a problematic view, imagine it is not possible to find a viable interpretation of 'all essential truths' which is compatible with physicalism. This means, in this aspect, this revelation thesis cannot do any better than interpreting the essence claim as 'complete knowledge by acquaintance'.

One question however remains open. Assuming that this form of revelation leads to anti-physicalism: is the thesis, at least, a good explanation for this claim? In other words, does this anti-physicalist version of the thesis have a good argument for basic properties in the Levineian sense?

Byrne and Hilbert³⁴⁷, Johnston³⁴⁸ and Lewis³⁴⁹ already lay the groundwork for such an endeavor. For them, it is clearly problematic that revelation leads to anti-physicalism. Stoljar profoundly analyses this idea in the context of revelation about experience itself, in what he calls the argument from revelation.³⁵⁰ The argument may be put the following way:

- (4) If Jones has an experience of type *E*, then Jones knows or is in a position to know the essence of *E*.
- (5) Jones has an experience of type *E*.
- (6) The following is one essential truth about *E*: having an experience of type *E* is identical to being in Phys.
- (7) Jones does not know, and is not in a position to know, that having an experience of type *E* is identical to being in Phys.³⁵¹

Stoljar notes that the four claims are inconsistent. In his opinion, if (4) and (5) are true, then revelation is true. However, if (6) and (7) are true, then revelation is false. The reason for the latter is that Jones would not know the essence of *E*, namely that *E* is

³⁴⁷ See Byrne & Hilbert 2007.

³⁴⁸ See Johnston 1997.

³⁴⁹ See Lewis 1995 and 1997.

³⁵⁰ See Stoljar 2009.

³⁵¹ Stoljar 2009, p. 123.

identical to Phys. On this view, the first two claims are closely related to revelation. This means that (5) states the condition under which revelation is possible and (4) follows from revelation. The latter two claims however are closely connected to physicalism. This means (6) is one possible claim that follows from the truth of physicalism and (7) is a statement, extensively discussed above, that seems to be true.³⁵² Stoljar thinks that if those four statements are inconsistent than one of them has to be false. In his opinion, it is obvious that (5) and (7) are stipulated, so one wants to assume their truth. Our options are therefore narrowed down to (4) and (6). Of course, the revelation theorist, Stoljar argues, maintains the truth of (4) and claims that (6) is false, therefore demonstrating that the argument from revelation shows that physicalism is false, proving it to be a good argument for anti-physicalism.

Now, for Stoljar there are three ways of dealing with this argument. The first option is to agree with it, the second is to assume that revelation is false, and the third – the so called Canberra Plan – is to substitute our ordinary concept of experience, where revelation is true, with a replacement conception, where revelation is false. The second and third alternatives are designed to deny revelation. In this context, Stoljar himself picks the third option, namely replacing the folk psychological account which entails revelation,³⁵³ with a conception that does not. This is of course a straightforward method to get rid of the problematic revelation thesis. Since this is however not what I want to do here, it is more interesting to follow the first alternative.

Before pursuing this analysis, it is necessary to see why both the second and third approach are inadequate. The former idea of simply denying that revelation is false runs into problems with Lewis's claim that revelation seems to be embedded in folk psychology.³⁵⁴ It is however not enough to dispute this claim. Since the folk psychological concept of experience seems to entail revelation one needs at least an alternative conception.

That is where the third option enters. The so-called Canberra Plan tries to

³⁵² For detailed discussion see especially Lewis 1995.

³⁵³ This idea is due to Lewis. Lewis thinks that the problem with revelation is that it is deeply embedded in folk psychology and, therefore, hard to get rid of. See Lewis 1995.

³⁵⁴ See Lewis 1995 for discussion.

substitute this ordinary folk psychological concept of experience with a replacement conception. To do so, this plan tries to dispute the idea that a natural concept of experience entails revelation. By showing that cases which are supposed to support the thesis may be interpreted in a sense that avoids this conclusion,³⁵⁵ this objection to the revelation thesis tries to deny the necessity of revelation in each particular case of the conception of experience. In my opinion, therefore, we may assume for the sake of argument, that this is a real alternative and a thread to the revelation thesis. Consequently, I suggest analyzing the first alternative, trying to overcome its problems, and at last defend it against the Canberra Plan.

Opting for this alternative means for Stoljar – just as it does for Byrne and Hilbert³⁵⁶ – that one has to assume primitivism. As a difference to the latter proponents, it is not primitivism about color; it is rather a form of primitivism about experience. This means that experiences are something entirely different from any other existing entity. This follows directly from certain thoughts about revelation. According to Stoljar, even when paired with the hypothesis that experiences are soul like entities, revelation would fail to reveal this essence as well. For all the above authors then, revelation always leads to primitivism. The general problem is that any metaphysical thesis about the status of phenomenal properties cannot be revealed. Accordingly, experiences can only be primitive. Primitivism about experiences is, of course, implausible. Since this view implies mysterious basic properties in the Levineian sense, it is not only the case that anti-physicalism is true, it is far from clear what kind of properties phenomenal properties are, rendering any analysis dubious.³⁵⁷ If true, this version of revelation is of course in no better shape than revelation interpreted as complete knowledge by acquaintance. The only difference is that the acquaintance version may be interpreted as basic in the Levineian sense in two distinct ways. One version employs a basic relation, the other implies basic properties. Revelation interpreted as 'knowledge of all essential truths' can only lead to the latter.

³⁵⁵ Cases which are supposed to show that revelation is embedded in a natural concept of experience include folk psychology, obviousness, counterfactuals, two-dimensionalism and conceivability. For detailed discussion see Stoljar 2009.

³⁵⁶ See Byrne & Hilbert 2007.

³⁵⁷ In a sense, this is close to the idea that the acquaintance relation is not analyzable. For detailed discussion see especially Ali & Fumerton 2014, Fumerton 1995 and Sellars 1963.

In any case, this version of revelation does not widen our knowledge about experiences; it leaves us with an interpretation of experience that is mysterious at best.

III.2.2. Getting a grip on what happens

The problem of revelation interpreted as 'knowledge of all essential truths' is basically that, if not paired with *a posteriori* physicalism, it violates the Material Constraint, or should be rejected by the *a posteriori* physicalist as question begging. There was still the hope that the thesis might leave us with a good explanation for a tangible anti-physicalist approach to the phenomenal, but as seen in the last paragraph, this hope was quickly shattered. There may however be an upside to this version of the revelation thesis. Even though it yields no improvement over the previous acquaintance based account, there seem to exist possible ways to adapt the theory accordingly. Now, acquaintance by itself leaves only two options³⁵⁸ for its proponent. Any account that proposes the possibility of a substantial inside to the nature of phenomenal properties³⁵⁹ - or equivalently a strong account of acquaintance – leads to a mysterious and primitive view about experiences. Weaker versions however are only equivalent to the experience thesis and therefore without profound implications for knowledge about phenomenal properties. Since a theory based on a strong account already entails its undesirable results, this version of the revelation thesis is clearly lost from the start.

The upside of revelation interpreted as 'knowledge of all essential of truths' is that it gets us closer to a solution of the main problems. As we have seen in the last paragraph, the compatibility problem was *almost* solved by introducing *a posteriori* physicalism. If one supports such an approach – which for the sake of argument I will do at this point – the main underlying problem for this explanation is that if it is necessary to know all essential truths to know the nature of a property, then one

³⁵⁸ Even though the strong interpretation of acquaintance can be differentiated by a demanding and less demanding version of the thesis, both proposals are equally problematic in what follows.

³⁵⁹ For detailed discussion see Balog 2009.

cannot fail to know all essential concepts. This means, *a posteriori* physicalism has to reject a version of revelation that entails *a priori* knowledge of all essential concepts. Since, if this version of the revelation thesis were true, the physical concept of phenomenal property *q* had to be known just by having an experience. The *a posteriori* physicalist however cannot commit to this account. The solution therefore involves that knowing the nature of a property does not entail *a priori* knowledge of all essential concepts. A resulting thesis could then be accepted by all who accept *a posteriori* physicalism.

To obtain a solution, we have to quickly illustrate the reasoning of an *a posteriori* physicalist. The strategy of *a posteriori* physicalism, or the phenomenal concept strategy³⁶⁰, is usually employed to give a response to the knowledge argument.³⁶¹ According to Damjanovic, the important claim made in this context is that, different to other concepts like e.g. water, phenomenal concepts – due to their special features – do not depend on the actual world and are therefore actuality-independent. It is often held that the corresponding physical concepts are also actuality-independent, suggesting that there should be an *a priori* knowable identity between both concepts. Damjanovic however explains that the unique claim of the *a posteriori* physicalist is that even if this idea is true about both concepts, it is not the case that one has to know *a priori* that those concepts co-exist. Again, so far this idea is not applicable to the revelation thesis. Revelation introduces the further claim that one knows the nature of a property, making it implausible to maintain that such an identity claim should not be known *a priori*.³⁶²

To solve this dead lock one now has to show that this last remark may be altered. It has to be possible for the *a posteriori* physicalist to maintain her original conclusion, namely that even if the phenomenal concept and the physical concept of *q* are actual-independent and *co-existential* – even assuming that revelation is true – one does not know *a priori* that those concepts are *co-existential*. If this idea turns out to be a viable position, then the two main problems of revelation may be solved. Firstly,

³⁶⁰ This name was introduced by Stoljar. For detailed discussion see Stoljar 2005.

³⁶¹ See e.g. Horgan 1984, Loar 1990, 1997; Papineau 2007, Perry 2001 and Tye 1986. For detailed discussion see Nida-Rümelin 2010.

³⁶² For detailed discussion about *a posteriori* physicalism in the context of revelation see Damjanovic 2012.

there may exist a version of the revelation thesis that is compatible with physicalism and consequently secondly, basic phenomenal properties in the Levinean sense can be avoided.

As we have seen *a posteriori* physicalism was introduced to block the knowledge argument. Since this approach does not entail knowledge about the nature of properties, Damjanovic introduces what he calls the 'Enhanced Knowledge Argument'³⁶³. This new version of the argument is supposed to show a possible strategy to reconcile *a posteriori* physicalism and revelation. The argument goes as follows:

Enhanced Knowledge Argument

9. If physicalism is true and Mary knows the nature of all physical properties, then Mary is in a position to know that p.
10. Mary knows the nature of all physical properties. [By hypothesis]
11. Mary is not in a position to know that p.

Therefore

12. Physicalism is false.³⁶⁴

The decisive distinction between Jackson's original argument and the enhanced version may be found in (10). While in the original version Mary knows all physical facts, in the latter case she knows the nature of all physical properties. According to Damjanovic, this difference however does not imply alteration in the basic strategy, since there are only two ways to deny the truth of (10). One way is to assume that the nature of physical properties is non-physical. Of course, a physicalist cannot allow this move, since in her approach all properties are physical by hypothesis. Another way is to deny that Mary can know the nature of physical properties. Damjanovic claims that this is only possible by assuming Russellian Monism. This view states that one can only know the extrinsic features of physical properties and not the intrinsic ones. Since this

³⁶³ Damjanovic 2012, p. 80.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

approach is also used against the original version of the knowledge argument, nothing changes for the enhanced version.

Since (10) does not entail a substantial difference in strategy in comparison with the original argument, two possibilities can be found in (9) or (11). Damjanovic argues that (11) corresponds to a similar thesis in Jackson's argument; *p* just has to be substituted with the corresponding claim. It seems then that the strategy change should follow from (9). However, according to Damjanovic, this is not the case. Instead by denying the relevant instances of (9), the *a posteriori* physicalist is in a position to solve the original problem the following way:

One such instance is obtained by substituting 'phenomenal red = *P*' for '*p*', where *P* is the relevant physical property. If the physicalist denies that instance of (9), as it seems she must, then she is denying that Mary must know the proposition 'phenomenal red = *P*'. But this means she is in effect saying that identity state-ments between actuality-independent physical and phenomenal concepts are *a posteriori* even when one knows the nature of the property at issue. And this is just the claim that is needed to block the Argument from *Revelation*. So, when it comes to the instances of (9) that involve phenomeno-physical identity statements, the extra wrinkle does not show that the *a posteriori* physicalist will face any new difficulty in attempting to reconcile *Revelation* with physicalism.³⁶⁵

There are however further potential reasons that could prevent the *a posteriori* physicalist from reaching her goal. One example is that there may be worries that one may not know essential truths about the internal composition of a phenomenal property. If both physicalism and revelation are true, then one should know such a truth. According to Damjanovic, this internal constitution may be described in two possible scenarios. The first scenario entails the internal neuronal structure of a phenomenal property, the second, a phenomenal property as functional role property.

³⁶⁵ Damjanovic 2012, p. 81.

At this point, Damnjanovic argues that this case can be solved in a similar fashion as before. When comparing the original knowledge argument and his enhanced version it turns out that the *a posteriori* physicalist in the first scenario is in the same position as any physicalist. This means that she has to find an explanation for why one is in a position to know the nature of a phenomenal property without being in a position to know all essential truths about it.³⁶⁶ In the second scenario the *a posteriori* physicalist has to insist in her original claim, namely that the relation between a phenomenal truth – a truth derived from phenomenal concepts – and the functional role property can only be known *a posteriori*.³⁶⁷

The conclusion of these considerations is that for a physicalist to be able to defend revelation, she should consider what derives from the new knowledge/old fact view³⁶⁸ about the knowledge argument. To know the nature of a property then is not to know all essential truths; it is to know all essential facts, or to put it in Damnjanovic's words:

A posteriori physicalists, having drawn a distinction between facts and truths, should hold that even if knowing the full nature of a property requires knowing all essential *facts* about that property – or all essential properties of that property – this does not imply knowing all essential *truths* about that property.³⁶⁹

III.2.3. Knowledge of all essential facts or properties

As seen in the last paragraph, there may be a viable interpretation of the revelation thesis that is compatible with physicalism.³⁷⁰ This solution assumes that the gained knowledge is ‘knowledge of all essential properties or facts’ of phenomenal

³⁶⁶ Note that Damnjanovic explicitly states that it is an essential truth which is not an identity statement. See Damnjanovic 2012.

³⁶⁷ For detailed discussion on this issue see Damnjanovic 2012.

³⁶⁸ For extensive discussion see Nida-Rümelin 2010.

³⁶⁹ Damnjanovic 2012, p. 83.

³⁷⁰ Of course, by being compatible with physicalism the thesis avoids primitivism as well.

properties instead of ‘all essential truths’. It is important to keep in mind that the internal composition of phenomenal properties influences the relation between revelation and physicalism. Deriving certain considerations about the difference between facts/properties and truths, *a posteriori* physicalism can maintain that ‘knowing all essential facts’ is enough to ‘know the nature’ of a property. This new revelation approach may be stated the following way:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in the position to know or know, for every particular essential property F of Q, that Q is F.³⁷¹

At this point, I want to indicate that one should be careful and not confuse this account of the revelation thesis with the one interpreted as complete knowledge by acquaintance. The confusion may stem from a lack of labeling. At a first glance both theses seem to be about properties. Even though true, the latter interpretation of revelation is about complete knowledge by acquaintance of the phenomenal property Q in question, while the former concerns knowledge about every particular essential property F of the phenomenal property Q in question. As seen above, one could label those essential properties also essential facts and avoid the confusion. Since nothing hangs on the distinction, I think one can use it interchangeably.

Now, according to Damnjanovic, this version of revelation includes that one has to ‘know all essential properties’ of Q for the thesis to be true. No particular concept of those essential properties is required. As long as one has some concept of an essential property of Q and knows that Q has that property under this concept, it suffices for this account of revelation to be true.

An *a posteriori* physicalist can clearly accept this thesis. Since it is not necessary – assuming the identity between phenomenal properties and physical properties is true – that one knows *a priori* that the physical concept p of Q and the phenomenal concept q of Q are co-existential, one may know this identity statement only *a posteriori*. This account of revelation leaves this possibility open. According to

³⁷¹ Strongly inspired by Damnjanovic 2012.

Damnjanovic this thesis basically states that knowing the nature of Q does not imply that one must know the identity of p and q, one just has to know that Q is identical to either p or q.³⁷² The revelation thesis interpreted as ‘knowledge of all essential properties’ seems to solve the compatibility problem with physicalism³⁷³, turning it into the best candidate so far for examination.

Even though eloquently solving the major issue in question, Damnjanovic argues that this account has to deal with two problems. The first challenge stems from the claim that one is supposed to be ‘in the position to know *all* essential properties’. This issue is related to the internal composition of phenomenal properties mentioned above. In the first interpretation of this issue, the *a posteriori* physicalist is not in a worse position than any other physicalist. The question about how to resolve the relation between revelation and neuro-structure in general, however, still remains. This challenge may be split in a two part question. One, does a physical property have essential properties which depend on the internal composition? And two, is one in the position to know that one's phenomenal properties have all those essential properties without empirical investigation?

Damnjanovic thinks that it is not clear how to solve both matters. The first question points to what can be considered elements of internal composition. According to him, various candidates come to mind: the kind of experience, e.g. visual experience; that introspectively it seems that phenomenal properties are simple and intrinsic properties of experiences³⁷⁴; and also the relation to other experiences of the same kind. Even though this might not be a knock down argument, however taking into account Damnjanovic's suggestions, we may assume that there are essential properties which are related to their internal composition.³⁷⁵

From what was previously said, it can be inferred that one knows at least some of the essential properties, simply not under a physical concept. The question however

³⁷² The issue is much simpler in the case of the phenomenal concept q of Q. Imagine that q refers to pain and Q is pain, then the trivial identity to know is that pain is identical to pain. This is however enough for this form of revelation to be true. For further discussion see Damnjanovic 2012.

³⁷³ As a consequence, the thesis also avoids the problematic assumption of basic properties in the Levineian sense.

³⁷⁴ This idea is based on Adams 1987 and Lewis 1995. Both note that when introspecting qualia, it seems that they have no structure.

³⁷⁵ For detailed discussion see Damnjanovic 2012.

remains whether those are *all* essential properties. Damnjanovic argues at this point that an answer may depend on the version of physicalism one defends. If one defends strong forms of physicalism, e.g. brain/mind identity³⁷⁶, and assumes that phenomenal properties have essential properties which depend on their internal composition, then it remains unclear whether one is in the position to know all those essential properties. However, if one supports multiple realizability³⁷⁷, then the internal composition seems to have no influence on any essential property. This latter account of revelation remains clearly compatible with physicalism. So, it remains unclear whether or not the thesis can be defended by those who support particularly strong versions of physicalism.

There is however a second challenge for this version of the revelation thesis, namely that is quite demanding. According to Damnjanovic, if we assume that the nature of a property depends on its internal composition, then one should know this nature 'all the way down'³⁷⁸. Damnjanovic asks us to imagine the case of water. Water is constituted by H₂O molecules. Those molecules entail hydrogen atoms. Those atoms contain protons and electrons and so on. The problem is one is confronted with is that one has to know the nature down to the last element. But what happens if there is none. According to Damnjanovic, it is at least possible that phenomenal properties might be properties that have no final element. This means that no one can know the nature of those properties, or even water maybe. Since this approach seems very demanding, somehow it has to be limited.

It seems evident that revelation interpreted as 'knowledge of all essential properties' is on the right track. The thesis is compatible with physicalism, therefore avoiding major rejections. Still, there are issues that are in need of solution. It seems basically that this version of revelation is too general and in need of qualification. On the one hand, it would be advantageous to clarify whether this account is only

³⁷⁶ The theory goes back to Feigl 1958 and Place 1956. Identity was famously defended by Smart 1959. For detailed discussion see Smart 2014.

³⁷⁷ This thesis was first introduced by Putnam 1967. The idea states that the mental may be physically realized in several different ways. Considering e.g. a tickle, it seems that the same tickle may be realized physically in a variety of different manners, e.g. by a human or an alien nervous system. For detailed discussion see Bickle 2013.

³⁷⁸ Damnjanovic 2012, p. 85.

compatible with weak versions of physicalism or strong versions as well³⁷⁹. On the other hand, it should avoid the demanding interpretation that one is supposed to know the nature 'all the way down'.

To show that it is not possible to maintain the broad claim that one may know *all* essential properties, two comments already discussed in the last section about preliminary issues of revelation may help. The first remark to consider is whether or not revelation entails the necessity of a concept of essence. The second idea to bear in mind is whether revelation amounts to explicit or tacit knowledge. In the previous passage I stated that for revelation to be true, it is neither necessary to have a concept of essence, nor does one need to possess explicit knowledge of that essence.

Now, limiting this approach clearly changes the requirements for one's knowledge about *essential* properties. Interpreting this version of the revelation thesis shows that knowing *essential* properties may not depend on the form of physicalism revelation is compatible with. It should, however, imply that one cannot know *all* essential properties.

To see this, consider what was introduced in the last section. We may assume that phenomenal properties have essential properties that depend on their internal composition. To know all of those essential properties, however, is supposed to depend on particular versions of physicalism. Strong versions of physicalism, e.g. mind/brain identity theory, show that we are not in a position to know *all* essential properties, since those depend on the internal composition of the brain. Weaker accounts, especially those who admit multiple realizability, claim that the internal composition has no influence on those essential properties. This assumption allows revelation to be compatible with the idea that we can know *all* essential properties. Now, introducing the ideas that one does not need a concept of essence and one only has tacit knowledge of the essences, but revelation may still be true, we will see that it makes no sense to ask what form of physicalism is true.

The reason is simple. Imagine the essential property that in introspection

³⁷⁹ This may even include *a priori* physicalism. But more importantly, it concerns the compatible with mind/brain identity theory, on the one side of the spectrum, and versions that allow for multiple realizability, on the other side.

phenomenal property *q* seems simple (*s*) and intrinsic (*i*). A believe that is widely held.³⁸⁰ In our interpretation this means that one is in the position to know or know the fact that introspectively *q* is *s* and *i*, and *s* and *i* are, as a matter of fact, essential properties of *q*. Since one only has tacit knowledge that *q* is *s* and *i*, one easily fails to know that they are essential properties of *q*. It seems that since it is necessary to be able to classify a property as essential to know all essential properties, it is not a problem with the assumed form of physicalism that we cannot know them *all*. In this case for the revelation thesis to be true, it simply does not imply to know that a property is essential, it must *only* be the case that it is essential. This means, the sole way to know *all* essential properties of phenomenal properties is to know *all* properties of the phenomenal property in question. This, however, seems to be too much to ask. This consequence is as similarly demanding as knowing the nature 'all the way down'. This account of revelation, therefore, clearly needs to limit the knowledge of essential properties first.

Damnjanovic may be right by hinting at a problem here. It also may be true that mind/brain identity makes it implausible to know *all* essential properties of phenomenal properties. However, if true that one needs no concept of essence and tacit knowledge of this essence is sufficient, then it is not a question about what kind of physicalism is compatible with this account of revelation. It is simply the case that one is not in a position to know *all* essential properties. At this point, one may try to treat both problems in this section the same way. The problem about *all* essential properties basically entails the problem of 'all the way down'. One may, however, assume the former worsens the situation. It generalizes the worry of the second problem by claiming that only knowledge of *all* properties entails knowledge of *all essential* properties. A very strong statement that, I suggest, cannot be maintained.

Even though I think that limiting revelation's compatibility with physicalism by limiting possible interpretations of physicalism³⁸¹ may not lead to the right qualification of this account of revelation, one may ask oneself why it fails. In my opinion there are at least two reasons: the first is simply that it is an ongoing

³⁸⁰ For discussion see Adams 1987, Damnjanovic 2012 and Lewis 1995.

³⁸¹ Just as proposed by Damnjanovic 2012.

metaphysical debate what form of physicalism is true. Without splendid arguments, it is far from obvious that such a debate would not already end here. Assuming one could come up with a positive argument, there is still a second reason which states that it is not clear if it would significantly change the outcome. Imagine on the one side of the scale mind/brain identity theory and on the other side any approach that allows for multiple realizability.

Now, consider the former case. There are essential properties that depend on their internal composition and identity is true. A possible result is that one knows those essential properties – under no particular concept of course – which one can assess without empirical research. This limits the amount of essential properties one can know in a very practical way, since it is not clear whether introspection³⁸² exhausts the knowledge of essential properties. Therefore, *all* essential properties could be qualified as all introspective knowable essential properties.

Consider now the latter case where multiple realizability is true. This means that there may not be essential properties that depend on their internal composition or better, there is no essential internal composition of the essential properties in question. This does not mean that those essential properties do not essentially have a physical structure; it only means that this structure is not essential to them. Qualification here means that we can exclude the internal composition of essential properties, since there is nothing essential about them. This leaves us in a position where we do not have to worry about physical structure influencing our knowledge of essential properties.

In my opinion the results of both restrictions is deeply worrying, but the latter qualification is particularly flawed. In this case, one assumes that if multiple realizability is true, then there is no essential internal composition. This, however, seems doubtful. The approach clearly assumes only coarse-grained functionalism and ignores fine-grained functionalism.³⁸³ Without further discussing the issue, I just want to note that it is unclear whether or not Damjanovic's interpretation is correct. Surely multiple realizability allows for a variety of internal compositions, but this does not

³⁸² There may be other ways to obtain self-knowledge. For detailed discussion see Gertler 2011a and b.

³⁸³ For extensive discussion of the coarse-grained and fine-grained distinction of functionalism see Sprevak 2009.

mean that this composition is arbitrary. It might still be true that certain compositional features are essential to the essential properties in question. If so, however, one seems not to be in position to know those features. It therefore seems that this interpretation is not necessarily better off than mind/brain identity. Without exemplification of the conditions for multiple realizability of those essential properties³⁸⁴ it is not self-evident that one can accept this hypothesis.

The general reason why this form of qualification is not practical, however, is closely connected to this last argument and the ongoing debate in philosophy of mind. If there is no clearly favorable thesis, then maybe it is not such a good option to restrict the interpretation of knowledge of *all* essential properties by some arbitrary forms of physicalism. This does not mean that if it turns out that revelation is only compatible with a special form of physicalism, one may not assume this position, it only means that it is not a good idea to restrict revelation in this manner, right from the start.

In what follows, I will focus therefore on two different accounts that qualify revelation as knowledge of essential properties. After discussing and criticizing the first approach, which involves counterfactual knowledge, I will focus on my solution (in the next chapter).

III.2.4. Knowledge of counterfactuals

One way to qualify the revelation thesis as knowledge of essential properties is to consider only counterfactual knowledge of those properties. To draw an important distinction, we may consider Stoljar's remarks about the difference between the following two scenarios:

On the first way, and the one that we have been adopting so far, the proposal comes out as: *F* is the essence of *a* iff in all possible worlds *considered as counterfactual*, *a* is *F* and nothing

³⁸⁴ The best option would be to argue that multiple realizability has no limits. In such a case, however, we have to accept many consequences, including e.g. the original extended mind hypothesis. For discussion on the issue see Clark & Chalmers 1998.

else is. Let us call the resulting notion of essence, the *c-essence* (for 'counterfactual'). On the second way, the proposal comes out as: *F* is the essence of *a* iff in all possible worlds *considered as actual*, *a* is *F* and nothing else is. Let us call the resulting notion of essence, *a-essence* (for actual).³⁸⁵

The distinction between both forms of essence states that "[...] we might say that being the watery stuff is the *a-essence* of water, whereas being H₂O is its *c-essence*."³⁸⁶ Those two interpretations of essence result in corresponding versions of the revelation thesis. *A-essence* corresponds to a-revelation which states that in order to understand a property one needs to know the *a-essence*. Consequently, *c-essence* corresponds to *c-revelation* which claims that in order to understand a property one needs to know the *c-essence*. Now, Stoljar thinks that the former account is often assumed to be unproblematic, so only the latter account is problematic.

This being said, there may actually be doubt about whether or not both *a* and *c* can really count as 'essences'. It is therefore questionable that the corresponding accounts of revelation may be maintained in its original form. Now, Stoljar clearly interprets a-revelation as an unproblematic idea. It may be held in all possible worlds that are considered as actual and is merely an approach to understanding.³⁸⁷ *C-revelation*, however, is the controversial counterpart. According to Stoljar, this is the version discussed in the revelation debate and it is hardly ever true.³⁸⁸

To show that both interpretations of 'essence' are genuinely different, we may want to consider the *a-revelation* approach to understanding first and ask ourselves whether this account qualifies as a viable proposal. Before doing so, however, we need to consider two issues. First, I assume that revelation is true. Therefore, if we stipulate that something is the essence of some property, in any possible sense, then it follows

³⁸⁵ Stoljar 2009, p. 130.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁸⁷ In this context, Stoljar attributes *a-essence* and *a-revelation* to a variety of philosophers, but especially to Jackson 1998. For detailed discussion see Stoljar 2009.

³⁸⁸ This latter version is what Damjanovic describes as the *c-essential* properties of a property in question. Those properties are maintained, even though other features may change in counterfactual worlds.

that we are in a position to know this.³⁸⁹ Secondly, it is important to note that both notions of essence are independent from each other. As far as I can see, to establish the notion of c-essence may be achieved without considering the notion of a-essence and vice versa. This means if one notion is eliminated, it does not mean that we cannot make sense of the other notion.

As we have seen above, Stoljar thinks that the e-revelation thesis entails understanding. He also assumes that u-revelation is prior to e-revelation. Now, u-revelation is the idea that if one understands a property, one is in a position to know the essence of that property. If I interpret Stoljar correctly, the introduction of a-essence puts us in a position to know or know the essence of a property in the actual world and therefore is a proposal about how to make sense of understanding. This position, however, seems to be problematic in at least three different ways. A) I already argued that there is no u-revelation. B) it overstretches our concept of essence. And C) even if assumed, it leads to an undesirable account of revelation.

I explained in a previous section of this chapter why u-revelation makes no sense (A). It basically breaks down to this: the thesis mixes a psychological principle and an epistemic principle in a non-suitable way. The reason this thesis overstretches our concept of essence, follows from the possible interpretation of a-essence (B). If the a-essence of water, to use Stoljar's example, is 'that watery stuff', then it seems to me that any property water has in the actual world has to count as essential. This means, there are no properties which are not essential (or maybe it is vice versa). That, however, depends on the favored standpoint. The important idea to keep in mind is that essential properties and properties cannot be distinguished in an a-essence scenario.³⁹⁰

Finally, imagine that we can overcome these worries (C). In this case, it still seems that we have to assume an account of the revelation thesis that I already

³⁸⁹ This move is purely practical in nature. Revelation, of course, depends on the essence claim. However, 'essence' does not depend on revelation. The reason I believe revelation to be true, at this point, is that if either a-essence or c-essence, or both, turn out to be false, then the corresponding version(s) of revelation is (are) non-existent.

³⁹⁰ This is not entirely correct. There is a way to differentiate essential properties from other properties. This manner, however, is connected to what I will discuss in the third case. A way to distinguish both varieties of properties is to stipulate that essential properties are known by acquaintance, while all other properties are known by description. This is of course highly problematic.

discarded. Citing Jackson, Stoljar concludes that what we are in a position to know by revelation is the following:

Frank Jackson for instance, as I understand him, holds that to understand, e.g., water is to know that water is the watery stuff, i.e., “the kind common to the watery exemplars that we...are acquainted with”.³⁹¹

This is, however, the acquaintance account of revelation all over again. I think it was clearly shown in the last chapter that this approach is implausible. A-essence seems to be a misdirected way to interpret the essence claim and therefore a-revelation.

Stoljar, however, admits that the focus of his discussion is c-revelation and as a result c-essence.³⁹² Even though this notion is clearly more controversial, it is important to see whether or not this approach may lead to a plausible interpretation of revelation. The case of phenomenal properties may be stated as follows:³⁹³ c-essence properties are those properties of a phenomenal property which are stable in all counterfactual worlds. A possible resulting account of the revelation thesis, according to Damnjanovic, therefore asserts the following:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know the counterfactual extension of a phenomenal concept C of Q.³⁹⁴

Now, knowing properties which are stable in all counterfactual worlds does not mean the same thing as knowing the counterfactual extension of some phenomenal concept. Damnjanovic tries to bridge this difference by showing that in the case of experiences one focuses on the features of those experiences. This means that the counterfactual extensions of a concept of a phenomenal property eliminate all contingent features of that experience first. After that it determines which of the remaining features of that experience may be altered without losing its particular phenomenal property.

³⁹¹ Stoljar 2009, p. 131. The original Jackson quote may be found in Jackson 1998, p. 49.

³⁹² See Stoljar 2009.

³⁹³ This idea stems from Damnjanovic 2012.

³⁹⁴ Strongly inspired by Damnjanovic 2012.

According to Nida-Rümelin, this is the reason why metaphysical discussions about the essence of phenomenal properties are mainly about their implementation in counterfactual worlds.³⁹⁵ From this idea, Damnjanovic concludes that knowing the counterfactual extension of a phenomenal concept entails in some sense knowledge about 'what makes the property the property it is'³⁹⁶, living up to Lewis's uncommonly strong knowledge constraint³⁹⁷. This is however not the only benefit of this approach. To know the nature of phenomenal properties, according to Damnjanovic, does not depend on the version of physicalism one assumes. This account of the revelation therefore avoids metaphysical discussions about physicalism.

To find out whether or not 'knowledge of the counterfactual extensions of a phenomenal concept' is suited to qualify the revelation thesis we need to examine its exemplification. The basic line of thought of this theory is taken from works by Chalmers and Nida-Rümelin.³⁹⁸ Damnjanovic thinks therefore that to establish this approach, one must focus on their following claim:

For some concepts we are in a position to say, for each world considered counterfactually, what the extension of that concept is. In other words, for every counterfactual world there is some presentation of it such that we are able to determine the extension of the concept at that world. If we have this ability, then we can be said to know the nature of the property associated with the concept.³⁹⁹

Since, according to both authors, phenomenal concepts are actuality-independent⁴⁰⁰, one may know the essence of those properties without knowing which of the worlds is actual and which is counterfactual. Damnjanovic thinks that the only knowledge one needs, is some default knowledge of the phenomenal concept in question. This theory therefore claims that if a concept is actuality-independent, then it is revelatory in

³⁹⁵ See especially Nida-Rümelin 2007a for detailed discussion.

³⁹⁶ Damnjanovic 2012, p. 86.

³⁹⁷ See Lewis 1995.

³⁹⁸ See Chalmers 2004, 2009 and Nida-Rümelin 2007a.

³⁹⁹ Damnjanovic 2012, p. 86.

⁴⁰⁰ This idea is, as far as I can see, already favored by Damnjanovic at an earlier stage of his argumentation and therefore not entirely new. See Damnjanovic 2012.

relevant sense. We have already seen that the same applies, not only to the phenomenal concept of phenomenal properties, but to the corresponding physical concept as well. Now, on the contrary to many *a posteriori* physicalists⁴⁰¹, on the one hand, Chalmers and Nida-Rümelin argue that the identity of those concepts has to be known *a priori*. Since physicalism cannot commit to this claim, it is therefore false. On the other hand, Damjanovic insists that the *a posteriori* physicalist has good reasons to deny this claim.⁴⁰² He concludes therefore that his version of revelation interpreted as 'knowledge of the counterfactual extensions of a phenomenal concept' is not only compatible with physicalism, but the adequate interpretation of the revelation thesis.

So far we have seen what a viable version of the revelation thesis should explain and what it must fulfill. This idea is about epistemic specialness. This means, until now, I implicitly assumed that if some property is revelatory, then one is in a privileged epistemic situation. In this case, the thesis is about experience itself and should provide an explanation for our *privileged access* to our phenomenal properties. The revelation thesis should also avoid certain pitfalls, especially those which arise from the acquaintance approach. This means, revelation should not entail any basic relations or properties in the Levineian sense⁴⁰³ and if possible it should be compatible with physicalism.⁴⁰⁴ Finally, the revelation thesis must lead to an *adequate* description of what it means to know the nature of the phenomenal properties of experience.⁴⁰⁵

Damjanovic himself is not interested in whether or not revelation may explain our *privileged access* to the phenomenal. He simply wants to show that revelation does not necessarily violate physicalism. One could argue that this is already enough to show that our access to our phenomenal properties is epistemic superior and I agree that if what Damjanovic claims is true, one only has to frame the theory in the right context. Since his version of revelation, at a first glance, fulfills all the desired

⁴⁰¹ For proponents see footnote 361.

⁴⁰² Note that the reasoning of an *a posteriori* physicalist is explained in the section entitled 'Getting a grip on what happens'. For further discussion see especially Nida-Rümelin 2010.

⁴⁰³ This may only be the case, if revelation explains those relations or properties to the fullest. This means no mysteries about those relations or properties may remain.

⁴⁰⁴ By doing so, the thesis sidesteps the problems of the first statement.

⁴⁰⁵ Note that the acquaintance theorist seems to ask for something similar. For a contemporary acquaintance theorist, it is essential that her approach enables substantial insights to the nature of a property. It seems to me, however, that this claim is not explained or justified at all. See Balog 2009 for this requirement.

requirements, the only issue left is to test its soundness. Since the two most important criteria to evaluate any revelation approach may be found in its compatibility with physicalism and whether or not the version in question is an adequate interpretation of revelation, I will analyze Damjanovic's thesis in the light of these ideas.

To evaluate the first issue, namely the compatibility with physicalism, one may ask the following: is it necessary to know the identity of co-existing actuality-independent concepts *a priori*, or is it possible to learn about this fact *a posteriori*? In this particular case, the co-existing actuality-independent concepts in question are the phenomenal concepts and the physical concepts of a given phenomenal property. Damjanovic's revelation thesis relies on the assumption that *a posteriori* physicalism is true. Now, the general strategy of an *a posteriori* physicalist may, according to Nida-Rümelin, be put the following way:

All proponents of the view [*a posteriori* physicalism] point out that, according to their proposal, physical concepts and phenomenal concepts are cognitively independent: it is impossible to see *a priori* that something that falls under a *physical concept* of a particular phenomenal character also falls under the corresponding *phenomenal concept* of that phenomenal character.⁴⁰⁶

This is true for all cases. For famous Mary, the perceptual super scientist, it is possible to have all physical concepts about a perceptual experience – including the physical concepts of the corresponding phenomenal properties – without having the phenomenal concepts of those properties.⁴⁰⁷ More natural cases are usually the other way around. Someone may have a phenomenal concept of, say, phenomenal redness, without having the physical concept of this property. Sometimes, it can even be the case that one has both concepts at the same time and still cannot work out that they are identical. This is the case discussed above.⁴⁰⁸

The basic line of objection to *a posteriori* physicalism suggests that its

⁴⁰⁶ Nida-Rümelin 2010, § 4.6.

⁴⁰⁷ This is true, since she must have the experience first.

⁴⁰⁸ See especially Damjanovic 2012 for details.

proponent depends on two modes of presentation. According to Nida-Rümelin, this implies the following idea:

[T]he subject knows the fact under one mode of presentation and does not know it under some other mode of presentation. So, for example, a person may know the fact that Venus is a planet under the mode of presentation associated with “the morning star is a planet” and fail to know the very same fact under the mode of presentation associated with “the evening star is a planet.” In this particular case, as in many others, the difference in the mode of presentation involves two different properties that are used to fix the referent. In one mode of presentation Venus is given as the heavenly body visible late in the morning (or some similar property), whereas in the other mode of presentation the object is given as the heavenly body visible early in the evening.⁴⁰⁹

If true, this is certainly an undesirable consequence for the *a posteriori* physicalist, since it means to introduce non-physical entities. On the one hand, believing a fact about the phenomenal under the physical mode of presentation refers to the phenomenal as a physical property. On the other hand, believing a fact about the phenomenal under the phenomenal mode of presentation refers to the phenomenal as a non-physical (phenomenal) property. It is therefore the case that two different referent fixing properties are introduced and the proposal fails.⁴¹⁰

The underlying assumptions about the kind of physicalism employed by Damjanovic's account of revelation, lets it suffer from this issues as well. It is clearly not so much a problem of his account of the revelation thesis; it is rather the necessity to depend on *a posteriori* physicalism. Since Damjanovic is therefore in no better situation than any other proponent of this version of physicalism, his account stays and falls with the success of this approach. Since, in my opinion, the opponents raise a convincing argument against *a posteriori* physicalism in general, one needs to consider

⁴⁰⁹ Nida-Rümelin 2010, § 4.8.

⁴¹⁰ For detailed discussion see Nida-Rümelin 2010. Proponents of different versions of this argument include e.g. Block 2007, Chalmers 1996, 2003, 2007; Nida-Rümelin 2007a and White 2007.

an alternative account that avoids this critique. According to Nida-Rümelin such an alternative can be found in Loar.⁴¹¹ Loar assumes that phenomenal concepts are recognitional in nature. This means, to have a phenomenal concept of some phenomenal property is to recognize that property while being present. This recognitional (phenomenal) concept refers to its referent, i.e. the phenomenal property as physical property, directly. Loar describes this idea the following way:

[A phenomenal concept and a physical concept that] converge on a [physical] property, may have that [physical] property as their common reference, in the following way. A recognitional concept may involve the ability to class together, to discriminate, things that have a given objective property. Say that a recognitional concept is related thus to a property, the property *triggers* applications of the concept. Then the property that triggers the concept is the semantic value of reference of the concept; the concept directly refers to the property, unmediated by a higher-order reference-fixer. Now suppose we have an independent account of what a property a given theoretical concept refers to. Nothing prevents that property from being the property that triggers a given recognitional concept, and so the two concepts can converge in their reference despite their cognitive independence, the latter being a sort of brute psychological fact.⁴¹²

Even though often criticized⁴¹³, this solution is designed to solve the problem of two reference fixing properties and may save *a posteriori* physicalism. This triggers however an old issue. What Loar describes as direct and unmediated reference is, of course, nothing else than the acquaintance thesis. But this reinstates the problem of basic relations in the Levineian sense.⁴¹⁴ Since I argued against this idea in length in the

⁴¹¹ See Nida-Rümelin 2010 and for detailed discussion Loar 1990, 1997.

⁴¹² Loar 1990, pp. 87-88.

⁴¹³ For critics see e.g. Levine 2007 and White 2007. See also Nida-Rümelin 2010.

⁴¹⁴ There is a second issue I will only mention here. To maintain a strong account of acquaintance, it actually may be necessary for anti-physicalism to be true. Since an epistemic special relation is in need of an explanation, it is often held that this stems from the fact that phenomenal properties

first chapter, reappearance should be avoided. However, this is not only a problem for Damjanovic's account of revelation alone, it also defeats any account that interprets the essence claim of revelation as knowing all/some properties or facts. Since, in my opinion, a qualified version of this interpretation is appropriate, it is necessary to discuss particular problems for Damjanovic's thesis.

So far it seems that the revelation thesis in question is a viable account, assuming that *a posteriori* physicalism is true. The remaining question is whether or not this approach is an *adequate* account of the revelation thesis. I have already stated that it is necessary to qualify the revelation thesis to limit the 'knowledge of *all* essential properties' requirement. It is, however, important to keep in mind that we cannot constraint revelation arbitrarily. We need an account that adequately describes the situation. Damjanovic's restriction leaves us with the following interpretation:

[This version of revelation] [...] implies only that the relevant experiences put us in a position to know enough essential truths or properties of [a phenomenal property] [...] so that we can determine the counterfactual extension of [that property] [...].⁴¹⁵

Even though this seems to be a weaker version of revelation, it adequately describes, according to Damjanovic, that one can know the nature of phenomenal properties. As already pointed out, this is due to the idea that in the actual world properties only contingently share features, while counterfactual extensions fix features across possible worlds. Counterfactual extensions therefore refer in some sense to the nature of that property.

This solution seems to be adequately accommodating a qualified account of revelation. It limits the knowledge of the relevant properties appropriately and leaves us with an adequate version of the revelation thesis. However, this account can only achieve its task by implicitly sidestepping the problems of phenomenal concepts. Even though advocating the compatibility of revelation with physicalism, Damjanovic

have an independent ontological status. I have discussed this issue in length in the first chapter. For discussion see e.g. Gertler 1999.

⁴¹⁵ Damjanovic 2012, p. 86.

assumes that phenomenal concepts are actuality-independent and therefore appropriately revelatory. He also claims that one can know these counterfactual extensions of that concept by only depending on knowledge for the possession of that phenomenal concept, but without knowing which world is the actual.⁴¹⁶ In a footnote Damjanovic states what this required knowledge amounts to:

[...] I say we know the counterfactual extension of a phenomenal concept because when the phenomenal *property* is imaginatively presented as being instantiated at a certain region in a counterfactual world we can recognize it falls under the concept.⁴¹⁷

What Damjanovic, however, fails to mention is that actuality-independence of phenomenal concepts has to be explained. Both, the physicalist and the anti-physicalist, agree that phenomenal concepts are special in this sense. Balog, however, claims that the latter often thinks that the independent ontological status of phenomenal properties leads to phenomenal concepts which are directly related to those properties via acquaintance. It is therefore the ontological independence that accounts for the specialness of phenomenal concepts.⁴¹⁸ The proponent of the former view depends, according to Balog, on the view that there is no such thing as ontologically independent phenomenal properties. There is only '*dualism of concepts*'⁴¹⁹. This last idea is according to the physicalist also the reason why dualism *seems* to be true.

What was claimed against the *a posteriori* physicalist in general comes back to haunt Damjanovic's proposal of the revelation thesis in particular now. He obviously should not claim that the specialness of phenomenal concepts lies in the acquaintance relation with our consciously present phenomenal properties. First of all, this may undermine his tentative to unit revelation with physicalism, and second, with those underlying assumptions, it will be difficult to defend a substantial approach to the

⁴¹⁶ See Damjanovic 2012. His assumption is based on Chalmers 2004, 2009 and Nida-Rümelin 2007a. Both authors explicitly defend anti-physicalism.

⁴¹⁷ Damjanovic 2012, p. 87, footnote 27.

⁴¹⁸ Chalmers 2003 explains in length how *direct* phenomenal concepts depend on acquaintance. For discussion see Balog 2009.

⁴¹⁹ Balog 2009, p. 303.

acquaintance account.⁴²⁰

Damnjanovic is therefore bound to assume the specialness of phenomenal concepts in the sense of the phenomenal concept strategy⁴²¹. As shown in the previous section, this idea is not easy to defend. The above argument already showed the problems *a posteriori* physicalism faces. Focusing on the phenomenal concept strategy seems not to help accommodate the situation. Criticism⁴²² therefore is intense. Clearly one of the strongest arguments against this proposal is Chalmers's 'master argument'⁴²³. This argument is of special interest, since it is directed against this strategy in general. As stated above, phenomenal concepts are designed to rebut the anti-physicalist claim that phenomenal properties are ontologically independent. According to Chalmers, however, the strategy maneuvers itself into a dilemma. The argument may be spelled out in the following way:

1. If $P \& \sim C$ is conceivable, then C is not physically explicable.
 2. If $P \& \sim C$ is not conceivable, then C cannot explain our epistemic situation.
-
3. Either C is not physically explicable, or C cannot explain our epistemic situation.⁴²⁴⁴²⁵

According to Chalmers, thesis C is introduced by the phenomenal concept strategist to show that humans have the claimed psychological key feature stated by C (C explains why there seems to be an epistemological gap). C itself can be explained in physical terms. Chalmers's master argument tries to show that what the proponent of the

⁴²⁰ Levine 2007 argues in this context that a substantive account of acquaintance is essentially different from any other epistemic relation. Simply by referring to the directness condition, however, does not put the physicalist in the position to explain this substantivity. See also Balog 2009 for discussion.

⁴²¹ See Stoljar 2005 for the name. Proponents include e.g. Aydede & Güzeldere 2005, Balog 1999, 2006, 2012a, b; Block 2007, Carruthers 2004, Hill & McLaughlin 1999, Loar 1990, 1997; Papineau 2002, 2007; Perry 2001, Sturgeon 1994 and Tye 1999, 2003.

⁴²² Main critics include e.g. Stoljar 2005, White 2007 and indirectly Chalmers 2003 and Nida-Rümelin 2007a. Especially threatening for the phenomenal concept strategist are arguments by Chalmers 2007 and Levine 2007.

⁴²³ Chalmers 2007, p. 173.

⁴²⁴ P stands for the complete microphysical truths. C stands for a thesis of the phenomenal concept strategy which attributes psychological key features to humans. For detailed discussion see Chalmers 2007.

⁴²⁵ Chalmers 2007, p. 174.

phenomenal concept strategy faces – even assuming that humans have those claimed features: either the thesis C is not physically explainable or it cannot explain the epistemological situation we are in. The proponent of phenomenal concepts is therefore not in a position to maintain both claims about C at the same time. This is a powerful argument and puts pressure on the phenomenal concept strategy as a whole. Unless Damjanovic gives good reasons why his particular idea about phenomenal concepts is different or his revelation account fails.

As is often the case in philosophy, there are proposed solutions. According to Balog, one can show that the master argument does not go beyond the 'original' anti-physicalist ideas, e.g. the explanatory gap.⁴²⁶ After extensively analyzing Chalmers's argument, she concludes that he is basically right: C – interpreted in phenomenological terms – cannot be explained physically, and C – interpreted in physical terms – does not explain our epistemic situation. Balog, however, claims that this is perfectly compatible with physicalism. The only thing the argument can show is an epistemological gap, a gap physicalism can live with. While anti-physicalism presupposes that an epistemic gap points to an ontological gap, physicalists resist this step. Now, Balog shows that Chalmers's reasoning relies on the 'original' anti-physicalist assumptions, namely that the physicalist's proposal is inconceivable, since her account fails to plausibly explain its constitution. This, however, presupposes an *a priori* entailment of an ontological gap. According to Balog, there is no substantial difference between whether these facts involve the classical idea that phenomenal facts are *not* identical with physical facts, or the new introduced phenomenal concept facts which are *not* identical with physical facts. Chalmers's argument therefore does not lead to new insights. It is, according to Balog, 'a mere refusal to meet the argument on its own ground'.⁴²⁷

To strengthen her position, Balog also claims that the constitutional interpretation of the phenomenal concept strategy⁴²⁸ has an explanation for acquaintance that is compatible with physicalism. This second idea, if successful, could

⁴²⁶ See Balog 2012a.

⁴²⁷ Balog 2012a, p. 19.

⁴²⁸ Proponents of this strategy include e.g. Balog 2006, 2012a, b; Block 2007, Hill and McLaughlin 1999 and Papineau 2002, 2007.

really change everything claimed so far. The physicalist could win the high ground and be in the position to rebut all arguments against her problem to explain the compatibility of acquaintance and revelation with physicalism.

Now, the specialness of the constitutional account is that it straight forwardly explains the epistemic relation to our phenomenal properties. According to Balog, “[o]n the constitutional account, tokens of a phenomenal concept that refers to a particular type of visual experience [...] are constituted in part by tokens of that type of experience.”⁴²⁹ This means that tokens of the certain type of experience act as 'modes of presentation of the phenomenal properties'⁴³⁰ which are instantiated by them. Balog compares the constitutional account of phenomenal concepts to linguistic quotation.

The idea of an item partly constituting a representation that refers to that item is reminiscent of how linguistic quotation works. The referent of ‘—’ is exemplified by whatever fills in the blank. In a quotation expression, a token of the referent is literally a constituent of the expression that refers to a type which it exemplifies, and that expression has its reference (at least partly) in virtue of the properties of its constituent.⁴³¹

While there is an account that resembles only slightly the linguistic counterpart, prefixing the experience itself by the operator 'the experience...'⁴³² to produce phenomenal concepts, Balog thinks that to explain those concepts one should take the quotational analogy more seriously and focus on the conceptual role of phenomenal concepts.⁴³³ Both versions, however, fall under the name quotational account of phenomenal concepts.⁴³⁴ The latter explanation states the following:

[...] on this view, every token of a phenomenal concept applied to current experience is (partly) constituted by *that token*

⁴²⁹ Balog 2009, p. 307.

⁴³⁰ Balog 2012a, p. 7.

⁴³¹ Balog 2009, p. 308.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

⁴³³ See Balog 2009, 2012b.

⁴³⁴ For a proponent of the former account see Papineau 2002, 2007, of the latter account Balog 2012a, b.

experience, and this fact is crucial in determining the reference of the concept. Not only is it the case that a token experience that constitutes a token phenomenal concept instantiates the phenomenal property the concept refers to, but it is *because* the concept is so constituted that it so refers.⁴³⁵

In Balog's opinion, this physicalist account of phenomenal concepts can explain the acquaintance relation in the appropriate manner. The reason is that the applied phenomenal concepts contain actual instantiations of the referent physically. Since, however, tokens of the phenomenal concepts present that referent – the experience tokens – as phenomenal properties, the reference to those properties is direct, grounding the acquaintance relation.⁴³⁶

Apart from explaining acquaintance in physicalist terms, Balog claims that her constitutional approach to phenomenal concepts accounts for revelation in a straight forward manner.

Undergoing an experience that instantiates the referent reveals something essential about the referent in a particularly vivid manner, namely, it reveals *what it is like to have it*. This means that phenomenal concepts provide grasp of the phenomenal properties they refer to in a way that reveals their essence.⁴³⁷

One can see that, for Balog, revelation and acquaintance are intimately connected. They might even be two sides of the same coin. Surely, acquaintance provides the important directness relation with our phenomenal properties, but revelation adds substantial insight.⁴³⁸ In my opinion, Balog's version of revelation seems to be closer to Campbell's acquaintance account than to Damnjanovic's interpretation. For one, she does not seem to qualify revelation in the relevant sense. Her idea about how phenomenal concepts refer to phenomenal properties, however, has straight forward consequences for Damnjanovic's approach as well. Since all other options to explain

⁴³⁵ Balog 2012a, p. 7.

⁴³⁶ See Balog 2012a.

⁴³⁷ Balog 2012a, pp. 7-8.

⁴³⁸ In the first chapter I mentioned the importance of this issue. It was taken from Balog 2009. See also quote and footnote 209.

the specialness of phenomenal concepts seem to be more problematic, both rely on Balog's physicalist grounding of the acquaintance relation to instantiate unique phenomenal concepts. Defeating her argument, therefore defeats, *mutatis mutandis*, Damjanovic's as well.

Since this account relies on its direct acquaintance relation with phenomenal properties, this interpretation does not fall prey to the problem that different 'modes of presentation' introduce. The only open question is whether or not this approach can do justice to what it claims, namely grounding acquaintance in accordance with physicalism.⁴³⁹ Levine argues against this possibility.⁴⁴⁰ He thinks that a constitutional account does not correctly account for the unique form of substantivity that acquaintance possesses. Simply assuming directness of reference is not enough. While this approach finds its answer in the cognitive presence of phenomenal properties – which is accounted for by physical presence – in phenomenal concepts, Levine thinks that it is impossible.⁴⁴¹ The reason is, according to Levine, that the constitutional account⁴⁴² is not better off than the demonstrative approach. In the end, whether assuming a mental pointing or quotational symbols the functional role is the same.

The relevant instance of acquaintance in terms of the constitutional account then is, according to Levine, that [...] a phenomenal concept affords acquaintance with the relevant phenomenal property by containing an instance of that property within it.⁴⁴³ This interpretation, however, shows the inadequacy of this account. Levine rebuts this view, by showing that the underlying physical structure cannot explain the cognitive structure. Assuming a representational system, what is important for acquaintance or cognitive presence is the relation between cognitive property tokens and not how those tokens relate to their objects. The latter relation only determines what is represented, leaving it unclear how this representation relation can account for cognitive significance. This means that difference in the former mechanism does not

⁴³⁹ One could also argue that there are no phenomenal concepts and defeat the issue before it arises. Since I am, however, more interested in possible physicalist explanations of acquaintance, I will grant, at least for now, the existence of phenomenal concepts. For the denial of phenomenal concepts see especially Ball 2009 and Tye 2009b.

⁴⁴⁰ See Levine 2006, 2007.

⁴⁴¹ See Balog 2009, 2012a.

⁴⁴² Levine subsumes the constitutional account under the self-representational model. That does not change anything for the validity of his argument. For discussion see Levine 2007.

⁴⁴³ Levine 2007, p. 162.

explain differences in what is relevant cognitively. In short, Levine's argument undermines the constitutional account's claim that substantial cognitive presence, which explains substantial acquaintance, can be explained by physical presence, denying that the physical presence is able to account for what is cognitively relevant.

In my opinion, this clearly shows that Balog's account fails. Again, acquaintance is supposed to be a special epistemic relation we have with our phenomenal properties. By forming the relevant phenomenal concepts, we gain self-knowledge about those properties. Those concepts are in phenomenal terms which are determined by our cognition. In this sense, what is relevant for phenomenal concept possession should also be determined by what is significant cognitively. Even though the underlying physical structure may dictate what is represented in cognition in the first place, it seems far from clear how this structure influences what is cognitively significant.

This, however, means that Damjanovic's version of the revelation thesis fails. Even though the account qualifies revelation in the relevant sense, and leaves us with a more tangible approach, it relies on the acquaintance relation nonetheless. The problem, as far as I can see it, is that the specialness of phenomenal concepts relies on this relation. Physicalism, however, seems to lack the possibility to account for acquaintance, leaving us with anti-physicalism or a mystery.

This means, so far we have no viable revelation thesis. It seems that the problem is inherited from its origin. Russell entangled his idea of acquaintance intimately with the revelation thesis making it therefore difficult to separate the two ideas. In what follows, I will try to show, however, that a qualified and substantial account of revelation does not have to depend on the acquaintance approach and that it is compatible with physicalism.

IV. THE RIGHT KIND OF REVELATION

So far, we have seen those interpretations of *revelation* not viable for self-knowledge about the phenomenal. What we need now, is to formulate a version of the revelation thesis that describes our epistemic situation adequately and avoids the problems discussed. I have already stated that, in my opinion, the best candidate should qualify the idea that I am in a position to know or know '*all* the essential properties'. To accomplish my goal, I will try to show the following:

- Revelation should be qualified as "Q-me revelation". The essence claim of the final version of this view refers to knowledge that 'E is essentially Q-me'.
- Q-me revelation reveals phenomenal Q-me-ism (an ontological account of phenomenal properties, respectively experiences, that is based on some ideas stemming from adverbialism).
- Phenomenal Q-me-ism is the correct ontological account of phenomenal properties and experiences.
- Q-me revelation explains privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal.
- Q-me revelation is compatible with physicalism.

IV.1. Essential properties qualified: a first approximation

I hope it became clear that this interpretation of the revelation thesis refers to an account that interprets the essence claim in a particular way. The basic idea is that what we know essentially are not *truths* about experiences, but rather *facts* or *properties*. The thesis therefore states the following:

By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in the position to know

or know, for every particular essential property F of Q, that Q is F.⁴⁴⁴

This thesis has, according to Damjanovic, a decisive advantage over 'knowledge of *all* truths'. This advantage can be seen by the claim that we only need to know all essential properties of Q, but not under one particular concept. Interpreting revelation this way does not need to account for the identity with physicalism.

There is, however, a downside. This thesis needs to explain what its stands on relational properties of internal constitution are, i.e. whether or not those properties are conjunctive or structural. Damjanovic thinks that, since we are not aware of certain constitutional properties, we might fail to know some essential properties F of Q. One explanation depends on whether or not physical properties are essential to the internal constitution, and if we are capable to know all those properties without empirical investigation. A possible solution is, according to Damjanovic, to assume that physical properties are essential properties and, if *identity* is true, is to acknowledge that we know those properties under phenomenal concepts. As a consequence, we at least know some of the essential properties, the question remains, however, whether we know all of them. Now, it is not clear if we can really know all essential properties – especially the physical ones – under a different concept. Such a view is in need of further argumentation. One way to avoid the issue is to give up *identity* and allow multiply realizability. The advantage is that in this interpretation of *revelation* the physical constitution is not essential and therefore knowledge of all essential properties *might* be possible. More importantly, such a thesis is compatible with some forms of physicalism.

According to Damjanovic, whether or not this revelation thesis is true depends, in the end, on how physicalism is spelled out. He thinks that this is a quite demanding solution of the compatibility problem. This does not mean he discards this view entirely, but given its complexity, he gives it up for, what he thinks, is a less demanding one.

In one important sense Damjanovic is right. This revelation thesis asks for a

⁴⁴⁴ Strongly based on Damjanovic 2012.

too demanding solution. In my opinion, however, he abandons this version of the thesis prematurely. It seems to me that asking for knowledge of *all* essential properties may not be possible even if we allow for multiple realizability.⁴⁴⁵ Since we may not be able to determine whether the internal composition depends on physical properties or arrangements, this reading clearly leaves open what an essential property F of a phenomenal property Q may include. This is, of course, problematic and of little help to solve the problem of privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal.

Then, how can we solve this interpretation of the revelation thesis? The most straight forward way of saving it is to qualify the thesis so that we do not need knowledge of *all* essential properties anymore. To put it differently, one could try to determine whether or not there is something like *the* essential property. Since I have already claimed that following Lewis's idea of essence means that F is the essence of Q, iff necessarily Q has F and nothing else does⁴⁴⁶, this is a genuine possibility. We simply need to qualify the essential properties F and assume that there is only *one* essential property. In what follows, I will try to model a fairly undemanding solution that is based on the original idea that revelation involves knowledge of essential properties.

Such an account of revelation has to fulfill two purposes. It should explain our privileged self-knowledge about our phenomenal properties and solve the compatibility problem in a straightforward fashion. Revisions, therefore, have to focus on avoiding the problematic interpretation of *all* 'essential properties'. One solution, I will argue, is a *Q-me-istic*⁴⁴⁷ account of revelation, which may be put as follows:

*(Initial) Q-me revelation: By having an experience E with the phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know that Q is essentially Q-me*⁴⁴⁸.

⁴⁴⁵ I argued in the previous chapter that multiple realizability is not as neutral as Damjanovic makes it seem. See also Sprevak 2009 for discussion.

⁴⁴⁶ See Lewis 1995.

⁴⁴⁷ Phenomenal *Q-me-ism* is an ontological view, based on some considerations introduced by adverbialism.

⁴⁴⁸ I am deeply indebted to Franck Lihoreau who, in personal discussions, suggested this notation.

I shall call this the phenomenal *Q-me*-istic interpretation of revelation or *Q-me* revelation. This account of revelation employs the same idea as the standard account introduced in the second chapter. The only difference is that it is already qualified. This means that the former approach claims that we should come to know that *Q* is *F* (for *F* is the essence of *Q*), while the latter that *Q* is *Q-me* (for *Q-me* is the essence of *Q*). The unqualified account needs us to know *all* essential properties; the qualified account only *the* essential property.

Now, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is partially based on classical ideas stemming from adverbialism. Since this view, however, is not unproblematic, I will first discuss it in more detail. After that, I will argue for the advantages of my account. The focus will especially turn on what I perceive as phenomenal *Q-me*-ism.

IV.2. Adverbialism

Classically, adverbialism⁴⁴⁹ was introduced to describe perception. Originally, the idea was thought to eliminate the act-object model with its ontological problematic assumptions. Jackson characterizes the view as follows:

The basic idea behind [adverbialism] [...] is to utilise the fact that, on standard views, appearances, after-images, sense-data, and so on, cannot exist when not sensed by some person (sentient creature), in order to reconstrue statements which purport to be about appearances, after-images and so on, as being about the way or mode in which some person is sensing. Hence a statement of the form '*x* presents a red appearance to *S*', becomes '*S* senses red-ly with respect to *x*', and '*S* is having a square sense-impression' becomes '*S* is sensing square-ly'.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ Proponents of adverbialism include e.g. Aune 1967, Butchvarov 1980, Chisholm 1957, Ducasse 1942, Sellars 1967, 1975 and Tye 1975, 1984a, b. For criticism see especially Jackson 1975, 1977. Recent proponents include e.g. Douglas 1996, Thomas 2003, Thomasson 2000 and Zahavi 2004, 2005. See e.g. Crane 2000 and Martin 1998 for contemporary criticism.

⁴⁵⁰ Jackson 1975, pp. 127-128.

The main advantage of adverbialism is that there are no problematic objects present before the mind. This is to say that even if there are objects in the world, there are no objects sensed. This view rather claims that the way one senses is fundamental to perception and argues that those sensations should be described as being altered by different ways or modes of sensing. This means, if e.g. a sensation presents us with red, it is not because it contains a red object, it is because the sensation is altered in a red manner. Thus, adverbialism only needs to acknowledge experiencing subjects, experiences and that experiences can be altered. In veridical cases of perception the perceiver is in some perceiving state where an actual object is the source for the alteration of the perception. In cases of hallucination or illusion the perceiving state is structurally the same, but the source is abnormal.⁴⁵¹

It can be said, however, that adverbialism – also often not spelled out in detail⁴⁵² – suffers from a minor and a major problem. The minor objection to this model concerns the intuition that experiences seem to have an object.⁴⁵³ The major objection is the so called many-property problem.⁴⁵⁴

The idea behind the minor objection is inherited from the 'qualia' problem. Martin analyzes this issue in detail. He thinks that the expression 'qualia' is confusing, since it denotes at least two different concepts and those are used ambivalent in the mind debate. One concept refers to 'qualia' as properties of mind-independent objects and the other to the ways of having experiences. This distinction clearly corresponds to the difference between the act-object model and adverbialism.

Martin discusses, therefore, which theory should we prefer. He thinks that, in complex cases, descriptions of our experiences cannot be given without reference to the appeared objects and, since the adverbialist account cannot do so, it is ruled out. The inadequate descriptions of adverbialism simply lead to an incomprehensible picture of our knowledge of experiences. Martin shows in an example of how an art theorist talks about a complex work of art the manner we assess such a situation, namely by attending to the objects of experience. Part of what an experience is like for

⁴⁵¹ See Crane 2014 and Aydede 2013.

⁴⁵² For exceptions see e.g. Sellars 1975 and Tye 1984a, b.

⁴⁵³ See especially Martin 1998.

⁴⁵⁴ This objection was first introduced by Jackson 1975.

the perceiving theorist cannot be made public, of course. Still, communication about the features of an object clearly exists. The audience can learn about the theorist's inner life – and also about their own – by listening to the descriptions. Therefore, one may assume that some form of investigation about the experienced world and our own experiences are implied. But most importantly, one part cannot be separated from the other. Martin concludes that it is not enough to attend to the ways of experiencing – as the adverbialist claims – one must attend to the objects of experience as well. Attending to one's experiences cannot be construed independently from attending to its objects.⁴⁵⁵

The major problem, the so called many-property problem, argues, according to Franck Jackson⁴⁵⁶, that after-images have many properties, e.g. being red, square, etc. The problematic issue for the adverbial theory is that it is unclear how to describe these properties. According to Jackson, adverbialism has only two options: it can analyze the properties separately, e.g. as red-ly and square-ly or join them into, e.g., red-square-ly.⁴⁵⁷ There are advantages and disadvantages to both solutions.

The first solution, attributed to Ducasse⁴⁵⁸, has the advantage that it explains how 'I have a red, square after-image' entails 'I have a red after-image'. The corresponding adverbial formulation is 'I sense red-ly and square-ly' and entails 'I sense red-ly'.⁴⁵⁹ There is however a downside to this solution. This form of adverbialism fails to distinguish between two different scenarios. One scenario is having a red, square after-image and at the same time a green, round after-image, the other is having a red, round after-image and at the same time a green, square after-image.⁴⁶⁰ Ducasse's idea of adverbialism has to account for both situations with the analysis 'sensing red-ly and round-ly and green-ly and square-ly'. Jackson, however, points out the following problem:

In essence the point is that we must be able to distinguish the

⁴⁵⁵ See Martin 1998.

⁴⁵⁶ See Jackson 1975.

⁴⁵⁷ There is the further possibility red-ly square-ly, but the problem stays basically the same. See Casullo 1983 for discussion.

⁴⁵⁸ See Ducasse 1942 and 1951.

⁴⁵⁹ The formulations are taken from Jackson 1975.

⁴⁶⁰ Examples are taken from Jackson 1975.

statements: 'I have a red and a square after-image', and 'I have a red, square after-image', and Ducasse does not appear to be able to do this.⁴⁶¹

This solution basically fails due to the fact that it cannot account for specific differences in the after-images.

The second solution is based on a version of adverbialism put forth by Sellars⁴⁶². According to Jackson, the general idea is that a new mode of sensing is created. If we sense e.g. 'red-triangular-ly', the new mode does not include 'red-ly'. It rather is a different, new kind of sensation. The problem that arises from this approach is that it cannot account for the fact that sensing 'red-triangular-ly' is only a special case of sensing 'red-ly'. Since, according to the theory, it does not entail the latter as component, the adverbialist, however, cannot establish this fact.⁴⁶³ This may only be partly true. The adverbialist could insist that while it is true that 'red-triangular-ly' is a new mode of sensing that exists as one whole, this does not mean that one cannot describe the sensation from different angles. This includes the description that one senses 'red-ly'.

Many answers have been given – especially to the many-properties problem – to avoid these issues. Since I understand phenomenal *Q-me*-ism to be different from adverbialism, solutions differ as well. As I go on arguing against these worries, I will explicate certain features my view, including what distinguishes this view from adverbialism. Of course, this also alters how I pretend to solve these issues.

IV.2.1. Martin's worries

How could we argue against the intuition that experiences seem to have objects? In my opinion, there are two things one can reply. The first response involves an analysis of the types of experiences involved in the intuition. The second answer focuses on possible interpretations of adverbialism.

⁴⁶¹ Jackson 1975, p. 130.

⁴⁶² See especially Sellars 1975.

⁴⁶³ See Jackson 1975.

Examples in the adverbialism debate usually exploit intuitions about visual perceptions. Martin himself uses the visual experience of an art theorist to make his point. He claims that when the theorist makes statements about shadows and objects in the environment, he also tells the audience something about his experience. Martin suggests:

what [...] [the art theorist] does here, and reports himself as doing, is to attend to what it is like for him to look out at the world around him, and attend now to the objects he recognises, now to the shadows by which they come to be visually defined for him.⁴⁶⁴

It seems clear to me that this description has only two possible readings: in the first interpretation the theorist attends to 'what it is like for him' and separately attends to the objects and shadows. It is not entirely clear to me how to treat the difference between the latter distinctions. I think that both, objects and shadows, represent something that could be considered the object, or better, the content of experience. I assume therefore they belong to the same category. That does not mean they fall under the same category as 'what it is like for him' to 'look out at the world'. The art theorist seems to attend to a variety of different things. This fact alone, however, does not explain Martin's swift conclusion. One may ask Martin: what is the art theorist attending to and what is his description about? Is it a situation, an experience or both? The answer is far from clear. Without further clarification Martin's conclusion is difficult to assess. I guess that for his purposes the second reading is more convenient, but he should make it explicit.

Assuming that he refers to experiences, there is still a second issue, namely that this interpretation assumes strong transparency. This means that Martin thinks that experiences tell us only something about their intentional objects, denying any kind of independence to the phenomenal. Phenomenal properties are therefore purely representational, i.e. they are entirely determined by the experience's object. Of course, if this is Martin's view, it inherits all the objections lanced against the original theory in the first chapter. It should therefore be denied.

⁴⁶⁴ Martin 1998, pp. 14-15.

We may also follow a third consideration to deny Martin's approach. It seems that Ducasse is right in thinking that examples from visual perception might be problematic. For him, the fact that e.g. colors are spatially external leads many to belief that they are also external to the mind and therefore exist independently from being experienced. In Ducasse's opinion, this is, however, based on confusion. Being spatially external does not mean "external to the mind", i.e. existing independently of being experienced.⁴⁶⁵ Other examples might therefore be more appropriate.

For Ducasse examples from taste already show that these intuitions are not obvious. His argument revolves around the idea that taste, e.g. being bitter, cannot be an object of experience. It should rather be considered a 'species of experience'. Martin may still insist that the bitter taste depends on properties of the food and therefore on external objects, it seems, however, that not everyone would follow this idea. Admittedly this is not a case an act-object theorist has to fear but she would probably avoid those examples.

Now, pain allows for even less confusion about the spatial external-internal. Of course, it is usually spatially located (in a body part). It seems however doubtful that there is an object to it. It is often claimed that one essential characteristic of pain is that we identify it with its phenomenal properties.⁴⁶⁶ This seems to point to the importance of being experienced rather than being a property of an object. Again, these considerations leave the door open to Martin to argue that phenomenal properties of pain depend on those properties of whatever the object of pain is. It is, however, obscure what kind of object that could be.

These considerations are far from a knock-down argument. They simply present some intuitions about the different kind of experiences we have. At least in some of the cases we seem to rely on the objects of experience, while in others we do not.

Since there are many possibilities to interpret Martin's approach, the following argument may be stronger. Perceptual standard views of adverbialism are usually employed to deal with the problematic ontology of the act-object models. The crucial claim is to deny that there are objects of experience and rather describe experiences

⁴⁶⁵ See Ducasse 1942.

⁴⁶⁶ See Kripke 1980.

as *ways of sensing*. Versions of adverbial accounts include, by now, views about all kinds of experiences, such as pain⁴⁶⁷ and consciousness⁴⁶⁸, or experience⁴⁶⁹ in general. There are also alternative adverbialist approaches available. Both Janzen and Douglas defend such accounts. For example, Janzen's adverbial interpretation of pain claims the following:

[...] according to my characterization, pains have intentional content: they are directed at surface or non-surface bodily areas. This means that the object of a pain is whatever bodily area the subject attends to, i.e. whatever bodily area she says hurts. If the subject complains of having a stomachache, then the object of her complaint, and hence the object of her pain, is an area of her stomach; if she complains of having an earache, then the object of her pain is an area of her ear, and so on. Thus, just as a subject can be aware of a visually (or in a visual way), tactilely (or in a tactile way), auditorily (or in an auditory way), etc., so a subject can be aware of an object—a bodily area—painfully (or in a painful way).⁴⁷⁰

Introducing intentional objects has, according to Janzen, three advantages. The first advantage is that all conscious states are object directed or intentional. Secondly, in the case of pain, it makes us aware of bodily areas. Finally, there is a connection with the external world. The argument given by Janzen is designed to show that it is possible to construe adverbialism in a way that it accommodates our intuition that experiences have objects.⁴⁷¹ According to such a theory, adverbialism and objects of experience do not have to be contradictory and Martin's worry might be too hasty.

Now, phenomenal Q-*me*-ism solves this problem in a different way. Since the thesis is not committed to the same interpretations as adverbialism the issue should

⁴⁶⁷ See e.g. Tye 1984b, Douglas 1998 and Janzen 2013.

⁴⁶⁸ See e.g. Butchvarov 1980 and Thomas 2003.

⁴⁶⁹ See Pendlebury 1998.

⁴⁷⁰ Janzen 2013, p. 864.

⁴⁷¹ Janzen himself favors an adverbialist-objectualist account of pain. The main idea is that “[...] being in pain – i.e. being aware of a bodily area in a painful way – involves being simultaneously aware of the way in which you are aware of that bodily area.” (Janzen 2013, p. 867) His theory consists therefore in two parts: adverbialism and higher-order theory of consciousness.

not arise. 'What it is like for me', or a phenomenal property, is in part different from an experience's representational object or content. This is not an uncontroversial suggestion. Strong transparency does not allow for such a distinction. Since strong transparency subscribes to the perceptual account of introspection, it is, however, blind to features of experience that do not form part of its content or object. What phenomenal *Q-me*-ism adopts from adverbialism is that it does not only implicitly permit the possibility of subjective feature, it explicitly stresses their importance. Describing those features in this particular manner amounts to the way they are experienced *by me*. This means in short: Q is essentially *Q-me*.

Does that mean I have to deny that an experience has representational objects? No, it simply implies that, even if there is an object, there is also a way it is experienced *by me*. Now, *Q-me* revelation predicts the existence on the latter feature, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism simply adopts this prediction. The relation between both, the ways and the objects, is thereby left untouched. This view, of course, does not result in an argument against Martin's view. It could still be the case that the '*by me*' feature, important as it may be, is determined by the object of experience. This, however, depends on the account of experience one assumes from the start. Martin explicitly opts for the view that objects of experience are the primary constituents. They therefore control subjective processing or experiencing. Even though such a view may be consistent with phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, it is implausible unless strong transparency is true.

IV.2.2. The many-property problem

The most prominent problem for adverbialism is clearly the many-property problem.⁴⁷² There have been many attempts to defend the adverbialist approach against this threat⁴⁷³, but since phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is not the same as adverbialism, I will employ a different kind of argument.

⁴⁷² See e.g. Crane 2014 and Casullo 1982.

⁴⁷³ See especially Tye 1975, 1984a and Sellars 1975 for discussion.

The many-property problem basically points out that adverbialist theories cannot accurately describe certain cases of perceptual experiences, namely those that contain more than one property. It is assumed that there are two standard approaches to solve this issue. Ducasse's approach is capable to explain reductions like e.g. red-ly and square-ly to red-ly, but fails to differentiate scenarios like 'red, square after-image and at the same time a green, round after-image' from 'red, round after-image and at the same time a green, square after-image'. Sellars's view – via creating a new mode of sensing, e.g. 'red-square-ly' – may avoid the first option's problem. Since this solution, however, assumes a new mode of sensing, some argue that it cannot account for the fact that 'red-square-ly' is only a special form of sensing 'red-ly'.⁴⁷⁴

Whether or not it is possible for classical adverbialist theories to solve this dilemma may be considered an open question. The important task is to show that the many-property problem does not concern phenomenal *Q-me*-ism. As stated above, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism accepts objects of experience. The important idea is that phenomenal properties of experience are interpreted in the following sense: Q is essentially *Q-me*-ness. This implies that apart from the qualitative properties entailed in Q, Q is also sensed in a subjective way, namely *by me*. To see how this idea influences the solution to the many-property problem one needs to make phenomenal *Q-me*-ism's view about phenomenal properties explicit. When I experience E, I experience it to include phenomenal property Q. But I do not experience Q only as a qualitative property, I experience it as *my own*, and therefore as *Q-me*-ness. The reason why the many-property problem has no impact on phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is that a phenomenal property is in a sense both. It depends in Martin's sense on the objects of experience, i.e. it accepts those objects. At the same time the view insists that I am sensing in a subjective way. Qualitative properties of the phenomenal, therefore, allow for objects, the adverbialist notion of sensing only applies to the fact that experiences are also sensed as being *mine*. Experiences with Q present themselves therefore as *Q-me*.⁴⁷⁵ Since the way of sensing only applies to the

⁴⁷⁴ I have argued above that this conclusion is not necessary. The adverbialist only has to distinguish between how experiences are and how they can be described.

⁴⁷⁵ Proponents of a similar view include e.g. Horgan & Kriegel 2007, Kriegel 2003a, b, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009a, b, 2012a, b and Levine 2001, 2006. These views often assume that the phenomenal character is 'the compresence of qualitative character and subjective character' (Kriegel 2005, p. 24,

subjective way of undergoing an experience, and not the qualities themselves, the many-property problem does not arise. This means that the adverbialist component of this view only concerns a property that all experiences share, namely that they are *mine*.

Adverbialism is a controversial topic. There are two main problems associated with this approach: the intuition that experiences have objects and the many-property problem. Whether or not classical versions of the theory can solve this problem may be an open question. At least, the adverbialist intuition based on phenomenal *Q-me*-ism can sidestep both worries. The reason is that the view can unit both ideas. It accepts that experiences have objects, but also includes that experiences are a way of sensing. In my opinion, therefore, there is no obvious danger in following this account.

IV.3. Essential properties qualified: a second approximation

The problem of revelation interpreted as knowledge of *all* essential properties is that it is too demanding, especially with respect to its solution for the compatibility problem with physicalism. However, if revelation is supposed to explain epistemically privileged knowledge of the phenomenal, we need to maintain some related approach. As we have seen, the demanding implications of the theory follow from the idea that one may not know which properties are essential and that one may not know all of them. This conclusion arises, since it seems unclear – assuming that structural or conjunctive properties are in part physical – that we can either know all essential physical properties F of Q or – denying the Identity claim – that the issue solely depends on how and if we are willing to limit multiple realizability.

This account of the revelation thesis, however, includes another interesting effect. By having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know, for every essential property F of the phenomenal property Q, that Q is F. It seems that this approach includes a further demanding element. To be able to

footnote 4). Critics of this view include Brogaard 2012, Gertler 2012b and Van Gulick 2012. For extensive discussion of the issue see Nida-Rümelin 2011.

determine that Q is F, this account has to entail the following claim about knowledge:

Knowledge that property F is essential to Q.

This is to say that one not only has to know that property F is instantiated, but also that F is essential. This means, this version of revelation requires that one has a concept of essence and, therefore, explicit knowledge of the essence as well. In the last chapter I stated that, according to Stoljar⁴⁷⁶, both requirements are not necessary for revelation. Stoljar argues that accepting such an approach has implausible consequences. On the one hand, this version demands that to have a 'tickle' experience requires a 'concept of essence'; something that seems inappropriate. On the other hand, if we really had an explicit concept of the essence of a tickle, then this essence would present itself literally before the mind. This latter consequence seems also implausible. Imagine then Damjanovic's original example, where Q is the phenomenal property of the taste of peaches.⁴⁷⁷ Damjanovic's version of revelation, then, would have the undesirable result that he demands a 'concept of essence' for the taste of peaches and thinks that this essence is presented literally before one's mind. I have to agree with Stoljar and claim that this seems implausible. If Damjanovic, however, insists that this is the correct interpretation, then the only possible epistemic relation that allows for these claims seems to be acquaintance, a relation that is to be avoided.

There is however an interpretation closely related with those 'essential properties'. Damjanovic's original formulation of his version of the thesis, of course, does not imply this reading, since his version is about 'essential properties'. But one could argue that revelation refers to the following:

Knowledge of features essentially phenomenal.

⁴⁷⁶ See Stoljar 2009.

⁴⁷⁷ See Damjanovic 2012.

Muñoz-Suárez neutral argument from revelation seems to point to such an implication. The idea behind this essence claim is that, from a phenomenological point of view, we can understand 'essential features' in the sense that these features are essential to experiential knowledge and not only to states or contents. Having experiential knowledge that does not entail those essential features implies that it cannot be phenomenal. Thus Muñoz-Suárez claims that essential features of this sort can only be known by the experiencing subject via the phenomenal. Those features are therefore essentially phenomenal.⁴⁷⁸

This leaves Muñoz-Suárez essence claim with a crucial advantage. Since the claim is not about whether or not we can know all that is essential, but rather about features which are essentially phenomenal, we do not need to know *all* that is essential. We only need to be in a position to know or know that for any of these essential features of an experience, this feature is essentially phenomenal. The revelation thesis, then, interprets the essence claim as knowledge of essential features, a feature essentially phenomenal by its *phenomenal presence*. The key idea then is not that what is essential to a phenomenal property, it is that a feature is *phenomenally present*. In this case, it is not an essential feature of a particular experience – an experience defined by its content – but the general feature an experience has to have, namely *something phenomenally present*. If I understand Muñoz-Suárez correctly, revelation therefore is not about a property of the content of experience, it rather gives rise to an epistemic condition that stems from the necessary feature that something is *phenomenal present*, the so called 'transcendental condition'⁴⁷⁹ for experiential knowledge. This condition, according to Muñoz-Suárez, enables experiential knowledge in the first place.⁴⁸⁰

In my opinion, by claiming that the revelation thesis refers to some general feature of experience, Muñoz-Suárez's account points in the right direction. I think however that revelation expressed as 'feature essentially phenomenal' may not go far enough. Interpreting the presence of a phenomenal feature as a transcendental condition for the possibility of experiential knowledge is to say that revelation is not so

⁴⁷⁸ See Muñoz-Suárez 2014.

⁴⁷⁹ See *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ For detailed discussion see Muñoz-Suárez 2014.

much about the experience itself, but rather about features of the experience which are necessary to obtain experiential knowledge. In my view, this is simply wrong. The reason is that revelation about experience itself comes first. It reveals the essential properties of experience. From such an account we may be able to conclude something like the transcendental condition. Revelation, however, needs to refer to the essential properties of phenomenal features, properties which secure that some features are essentially phenomenal. To put it differently, *phenomenal presence* might be essential to experiential knowledge, but revelation understood as being about experiences themselves, needs to refer to the essential properties, which guarantee *phenomenal presence* in the first place.

IV.3.1. Revelation and phenomenal Q-me-ism

Even though Muñoz-Suárez fails to account for those essential properties, it seems that the idea of *phenomenal presence* may imply that revelation is not so much about a particular experience, but about properties that are essential to all experiences. Now, if we assume that it is correct that revelation does not refer to the content of experience, therefore denying strong transparency, then revelation can only refer to properties which are not solely determined by the content. It seems to me, therefore, that it is not enough to simply refer to phenomenal properties as a whole. Since those properties are, at least, in part determined by the content of experience, the answer may be found in what properties are essential in the constitution of those phenomenal properties.

I hope to be able to convince the reader that the version of revelation I am promoting, is designed to explain those properties. Of course, I am also inclined to believe that my phenomenal Q-me-istic account can avoid the problems that stem from the theory, so that, in the end, this approach explains the privileged access to the phenomenal. Before exemplifying my argument, here is what Q-me revelation claims, again.

(Initial) Q-me revelation: By having an experience E with the phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know that Q is essentially Q-me.

Now, how does this account of revelation work? To see this, a distinction of how phenomenal properties may be interpreted is useful. As Nida-Rümelin shows, there are at least two classical ways we can conceive of phenomenal properties⁴⁸¹. They can either be properties of an experience or properties of the experiencing subject⁴⁸². This amounts to the difference of *being* an experience or *having* an experience. On the one hand, the first approach is capable to explain the following: assuming that physicalism⁴⁸³ is true and phenomenal properties are properties of an experience, then phenomenal properties are identical to physical properties. On the other hand, the second interpretation seems to account for an important intuition we have about experiences. If phenomenal properties are properties of the experiencing subject, then, so it seems, by having those properties instantiated, the subject may get to know what having those properties consists in. The latter reading has a certain natural resistance towards physicalism and complicates solutions to the compatibility problem. The former, however, has difficulties in explaining the privileged access.

Q-me revelation is the hypothesis that tries to accommodate both intuitions. It claims that in sense, Q is of the *experiencing subject* and at the same time that E is Q. Saying that E is Q means that Q is in part determined by the representational content. This means the 'what it is like' quality – even though it is always the case that 'what it is like' implies *someone* – is determined by representational qualities. However, since 'what it is like *for me*' also includes that it is a quality for the experiencing subject, the fact that the experience is *mine* does not depend on the content of experience, it instantiates the experience as experience. Of course, this implies two things: a) the privileged access, in the here assumed strong sense, can only refer to the properties which involve an experiencing subject; and b), the answer to both, the compatibility

⁴⁸¹ See Nida-Rümelin 2007a.

⁴⁸² This distinction is, in my opinion, quite close to the above explained distinction made by Martin 1998. They seem, however, to differ in detail. While Nida-Rümelin is neutral about objects of experience, Martin explicitly applies his account to this debate.

⁴⁸³ If not indicated otherwise, physicalism is interpreted as mind/brain identity.

problem with physicalism and the privileged access, depends on whether or not it is plausible to construct phenomenal properties in the above sense. This does not mean that it is necessary to argue for a special theory of phenomenal properties at this point. The relevant strategy should instead show, independent from the question about physicalism or anti-physicalism, whether or not the basic structure of those properties is composed in one particular way. If it turns out that this composition is plausible, then the most important step to ground privileged access is achieved. In addition, if it is possible to show that a feasible account of this structure does not violate the Materialist Constraint, then we should be able to exclude mysterious explanations.

IV.3.2. The subjective, qualitative and phenomenal

From a phenomenological point of view, there is the thesis that any conscious experience entails an implicit form of self-consciousness.⁴⁸⁴ This thesis has also supporters in analytical philosophy.⁴⁸⁵ The basic idea behind this approach is that any conscious experience is based on an implicit, non-reflective or pre-reflective form of self-consciousness⁴⁸⁶. Alvin Goldman describes this idea in the following manner:

[in] the case of thinking about *x* or attending to *x*. In the process of thinking about *x* there is already an implicit awareness that one is thinking about *x*. There is no need for reflection here, for taking a step back from thinking about *x* in order to examine it. [...] When we are thinking about *x*, the mind is focused on *x*, not on our *thinking* about *x*. Nevertheless, the process of thinking about *x* carries with it a non-reflective self-awareness.⁴⁸⁷

This implicit or non-reflective self-consciousness identifies us typically as the 'owner' of

⁴⁸⁴ See e.g. Gallagher & Zahavi 2010.

⁴⁸⁵ See e.g. Goldman 1970 and Kriegel 2003a, b and 2004.

⁴⁸⁶ It may be possible to describe differences in the notions of implicit, non-reflective or pre-reflective. I, however, will treat them as synonyms here.

⁴⁸⁷ Goldman 1970, p. 96.

the experience.⁴⁸⁸ This ownership is identical to the '*someone*' for whom 'it is like' to have the experience. This notion, therefore, may point to a possible theory that can describe the basic structure of phenomenal properties in the right way.

According to Gallagher and Zahavi, a first phenomenological approach characterizes the contrast between non-reflective self-consciousness and reflective self-consciousness in two ways. A first distinction states that while the latter is a thematic and explicit form of self-consciousness, the former is not. The second difference characterizes non-reflective self-consciousness as more basic than its reflective counterpart. This means reflective self-consciousness is only possible because it is based on non-reflective self-consciousness. Gallagher and Zahavi suggest, therefore, that pre-reflective self-consciousness describes the following common trait of experiences:

All the experiences are characterized by a quality of *mineness* or *for-me-ness*, the fact that it is *I* who am having these experiences. All the experiences are given (at least tacitly) as *my* experiences, as experiences *I* am undergoing or living through. All of this suggests that first-person experience presents me with an immediate and non-observational access to myself, and that consequently (phenomenal) consciousness consequently entails a (minimal) form of self-consciousness. To put it differently, unless a mental process is pre-reflectively self-conscious there will be nothing it is like to undergo the process, and it therefore cannot be a phenomenally conscious process.⁴⁸⁹

The important claim, therefore, amounts to the idea that unless a mental state is pre-reflectively self-conscious, it cannot be phenomenally conscious either, denying that this particular mental state counts as experience. In my opinion, this means that, just as *Q-me* revelation claims, there are two different kinds of properties involved when referring to phenomenal properties. One is of the subject and the other connected to

⁴⁸⁸ See Kriegel 2003a for discussion.

⁴⁸⁹ Gallagher & Zahavi 2010, § 1.

the experience's content. It also means that the properties of the experiencing subject are in a sense more basic than the qualitative properties related to the representational content.

This claim, however, is not undisputed. Even though this general idea seems to be a plausible phenomenological approach, Nida-Rümelin seems to think that philosophers commit a rather fundamental mistake. In her opinion, and contrary to what I claimed above, it is simply not the case that this form of consciousness points to the experiencing subject. It is rather the case that, by proclaiming the idea of mineness or for-me-ness, even more properties of experience are introduced. For starters, Nida-Rümelin believes that the notion of mineness or subjective character, as it is often called, is ambiguous. She thinks there are at least three different possible interpretations of this idea. The first interpretation refers to, what she calls basic intentionality, the second to primitive awareness and the third to awareness of basic intentionality. Since what I have said so far is more or less equivalent to the third account, I will discuss the problem of whether the idea of mineness is a property of the experiencing subject or the experience itself only in the context of this approach.

It seems to me that it is possible to settle the issue without discussing the pre-reflective self-consciousness claim in detail. Nida-Rümelin thinks that the problem 'of just another property of experience' arises, since, in the end, all views about the subjective character interpret the experiencing subject as independent from any other form of self-consciousness. The reason, or so she claims, stems from basic intentionality. Basic intentionality is, in her view, a description of the basic structure of experience in the following way: 'the experience is an event which consists in the fact that something is *phenomenally given* to some subject'⁴⁹⁰. Using the metaphor of the stream of consciousness, for Nida-Rümelin this means the following:

The stream of consciousness is the totality of what is phenomenally given, it is an extremely complex and rich totality of what is given to a subject in perception, emotion, bodily feeling, memory, imagination and thought, a totality which is in permanent change from moment to moment. The stream of

⁴⁹⁰ Nida-Rümelin 2011, p. 3.

consciousness, so understood, does not 'contain' the subject, it is rather the totality of what is present to the subject over a stretch of time. To say that basic intentionality is not phenomenally present, or to say that awareness of basic intentionality is not a kind of experiencing is to say – within the metaphor of the stream of consciousness – that basic intentionality does not occur in the stream of consciousness, it is not an element in it among others. Rather, we are permanently aware of the basic intentionality of experience in experiencing, in being presented with the rich totality which makes up the stream of consciousness within a given period of time. We should not think of the necessary relation between phenomenal consciousness and awareness of basic intentionality as relating two phenomena with one another. Rather, awareness of basic intentionality is an aspect of what it is to be phenomenally conscious of something. This is why basic intentionality does not enter the content of the experience. We are not aware of basic intentionality by experiencing it as a further element in what is phenomenally 'there'.⁴⁹¹

Nida-Rümelin concludes that, for such a view, the self is not somehow created by obtaining self-consciousness. It rather represents the independent and necessary basis for all experience. This, of course, entails the idea that when becoming aware of the basic intentionality, this form of intentionality has to be interpreted as the object of awareness, even if this kind of awareness is identical to a pre-reflective self-awareness. Nida-Rümelin claims that even when pre-reflective self-consciousness or awareness of basic intentionality is adopted for the first time, it does not create the experiencing subject since basic intentionality does not form part of the stream of consciousness. It is rather the case that we become aware of something, namely this basic intentionality and therefore the self. According to her interpretation of such a view, then, we "[...] confuse awareness of something with 'the something' one is aware of in that

⁴⁹¹ Nida-Rümelin 2011, p. 10.

awareness.”⁴⁹²

This confusion, however, needs to be avoided. To maintain that we do not have to view the self in this objective manner, one needs to follow Gallagher and Zahavi’s claim. They think that many phenomenologists⁴⁹³ believe that having an experience, and consequently being pre-reflectively self-aware, does not allow for a self as object. Being aware in this pre-reflective manner of one’s own self rather means that being conscious of an experience entails being conscious of that experience in a ‘first person mode of givenness’⁴⁹⁴. Gallagher and Zahavi therefore argue for the following:

[...] we should not think of the self, in this most basic sense, as a substance, or as some kind of ineffable transcendental precondition, or as a social construct that gets generated through time; rather it is an integral part of conscious life, with an immediate experiential character.⁴⁹⁵

This way of thinking is not unique to phenomenology. Some contemporary analytical philosophers⁴⁹⁶ seem to hold similar views. This means that Nida-Rümelin is right in doubting the claim that awareness of the basic intentionality is the appropriate interpretation of pre-reflective self-awareness in the sense that the experiencing subject is included in the stream of consciousness. Since basic intentionality includes an object by definition, in this view, the experiencing subject must be interpreted as an object. We should, therefore, give up the idea ‘that something is phenomenally given to a subject’ and find a solution that involves the experiencing subject. Consequently, I guess, if one is able to abandon the view that the *self* is an all-encompassing basic entity or condition for the phenomenally given, then the self may simply form part of the phenomenal. Entailing the experiencing subject within conscious experiences also avoids the stipulation of ‘simply another property’ of experience. Clearly experiences, then, may involve something more, namely a subjective aspect. This, however, is not just some new stipulated property, it is the subject itself.

⁴⁹² Nida-Rümelin 2011, p. 11.

⁴⁹³ See especially Husserl 1984a, b for discussion.

⁴⁹⁴ Gallagher & Zahavi 2010, § 1.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, § 1.

⁴⁹⁶ See e.g. Burge 2003 and Moran 2003.

The important question now is whether or not such a phenomenological insight may be translated to a characterization of what the subjective character is. Obviously, this is only possible, if we assume that Nida-Rümelin is wrong and the subjective forms part of consciousness itself. A valid account, therefore, must claim that, both, the experiencing subject and the qualitative aspect of experience can be integrated in the relevant way. Primitive, pre-reflective self-consciousness must form part of the stream of consciousness just as 'what it is like' does. Phenomenal properties, therefore, must consist in subjective properties, which entail the self as form of pre-reflective self-awareness, and qualitative properties, which consist of the 'what it is like'. The subjective properties, or so this view claims, compose the experiencing subject. This means that the pre-reflective self-awareness is in a very real sense a minimal form of the self.

Now, I considered this experiencing subject to be a plausible candidate to avoid being 'just another property' of experience in the last paragraph, but I still owe the reader an explanation. Implementing the 'self' within phenomenal consciousness means, in my opinion, that no new property has to be stipulated. The subject simply forms part of the experience and does not have it. We will see by having a closer look at phenomenal *Q-me*-ism that, not only is this approach adequate to explain this phenomenological view, it also accounts for this issue.

I stated above that adverbialism focuses on the sensing of sentient or conscious subjects. It is, therefore, not the case that some appearance or representation is presented to the subject, it rather describes the ways or modes the subject senses. I have shown that in its classical form, adverbialism presents us with serious problems. Phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, however, is better off. I have already pointed out that the latter view allows for representations, which means that it avoids the classical objections.

As a consequence there is an obvious difference between phenomenal *Q-me*-ism and adverbialism. Classical adverbialism ascribes to the existence of experiencing subjects which, in return, have experiences⁴⁹⁷, even if those experiences are modes of

⁴⁹⁷ I assume that what is important here, is the way Nida-Rümelin 2007a describes what 'having an experience' means. It means that an experience is the property of the experiencing subject.

sensing. The latter thought refers to the ways experiences are instantiated. Since an experience is a property of the subject, those different modes refer to the ways the property, or experience, is realized in the subject. This means, on the one hand, a representational account describes the experience as being e.g. a red representation⁴⁹⁸ that is presented to the subject. Adverbialism, on the other hand, designates the modes in which the subject has e.g. a red experience, namely as red-ly. The adverbialist view, therefore, clearly accounts straight forward for certain phenomenological implication. It fails, however, to incorporate the idea that experiences are about something. Representationalism is capable of the contrary. It accounts for what experiences are about, but does not consider our phenomenology. To maintain the importance of the phenomenal, it is therefore enough for phenomenal Q-me-ism to maintain that the experiencing subject forms part of the process of experiencing. This does not impose the idea – on the contrary to adverbialism – that experiences are not about something. A phenomenal Q-me-ist, therefore, should always have both aspects of experience in mind. This means that this view describes the ontology of an experience not as a classical dichotomy. This dichotomy may be put the following way:

$$\begin{array}{c} R \\ E = < + \\ Q^{499} \end{array}$$

For phenomenal Q-me-ism, an experience is the phenomenal structure Q-me, which can be translated in the function *me*(representational quality) or *me*(R_Q). In short, phenomenal Q-me-ism claims the following:

$$E = Q-me = me(R_Q)^{500}$$

⁴⁹⁸ This interpretation is what Nida-Rümelin 2007a describes as being an experience. This means that all properties are of the experience.

⁴⁹⁹ The schema may be explained the following way: The experience E is the representational content R and (+) the phenomenal property Q. Whether or not Q depends on R is not the issue here. I only claim that this is the classic dichotomic account of experience.

⁵⁰⁰ I am indebted to Franck Lihoreau, who helped me see this notion.

The function means that the representational qualities are realized in the minimal self.

There, however, remains the question of how we can spell out this approach. I could suggest a similar proposal as Janzen above and introduce an adverbialist-objectualist account. This view clearly has the advantage that it considers both required aspects of experience. However, since Janzen's version favors some form of higher-order theory of consciousness which implies an inner-sense model of self-knowledge, it cannot allow for privileged access in the sense of certainty. I will develop, therefore, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism differently.⁵⁰¹ In my opinion, one should focus on the fact that phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is specifically about phenomenal properties and try to make sense of that. If strong transparency were correct, there would be no story to tell. Phenomenal properties would form part of the representational content of experience and the story would end here. Since, in my opinion, strong transparency is false, phenomenal properties have to be, at least in part, non-representational. This means, I assume that the phenomenological structure of an experience has representational properties and non-representational properties. I also assume that the phenomenal consists in 'what it is like' and 'for me' properties. If an experience *E* with phenomenal property *Q* presents itself essentially as *Q-me*, then the qualitative properties have to be designated by *Q* and the subjective properties by *-me*. But what kind of properties does this involve?

It seems clear to me that a subjective property, or our pre-reflective self-awareness, cannot be representational. To represent something, or to be about something, there has to be something that can be represented, or something, something can be about. Usually we would assume some kind of object. Since pre-reflective self-awareness does not involve the self as an object, but as first person mode of givenness, it cannot represent the self as an object. It follows that subjective properties cannot be representational. Consequently, the question arises what the subjective properties are. My claim is that those properties are in fact the real deal, the most primitive form of the self as a function.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰¹ There may be the possibility of introducing a one-level interpretation of this account. I will, however, resist that possibility and try to develop phenomenal *Q-me*-ism in a related, but different way.

⁵⁰² There are different forms of minimal self-models. Since the structure of this primitive self is not my concern here, I simply claim its existence. For discussions about different forms of the minimal self

Now, qualitative properties are clearly different. On the one hand, they seem to involve qualities closely connected to the representational content. It is odd to assume that e.g. the representational content red has no influence on 'what it is like' to have a red experience. In a sense, one should expect that the representational content red at least partially constitutes the phenomenally experienced redness. On the other hand, we should at least concede that the phenomenal quality redness involves the experiencing subject. Since a phenomenal quality does not exist for itself, but entails that someone has it, we should expect – assuming that the subjective property is pre-reflective self-awareness and therefore a minimal form of the self – that, since subjective properties form part of the conscious experience, their involvement in phenomenal aspects of an experience can hardly be denied. However, even though it seems that the involvement of subjective qualities may influence the overall phenomenology, the qualitative aspect seems to be fully exhausted by the representational content. For having a red experience in a certain way it is enough that the red representation is a certain way. The qualities of the red representation fully describe red qualities. This, of course, does not mean it fully describes phenomenal red. Since the phenomenal includes the experiencing subject, this cannot be the case. It may be unclear from this train of thought what exactly the impact of the subjective properties on the phenomenal red sensation is, but it is clear that phenomenal properties entail subjective properties. Anyway, at this point, it seems to me that the qualitative properties of our phenomenology are exhausted by the experience's representational content.⁵⁰³

So far I have claimed that phenomenal properties are not entirely representational. The reason is that, even though qualitative properties may be solely representational, subjective properties are not. Both are clearly controversial. As a first step, one should analyze the relation between both types of properties and see

see e.g. Gallagher 2005, Gallagher & Zahavi 2010, Grafton 2009, Metzinger 2003 and Zahavi 1999.
⁵⁰³ An alternative may be a relational account of the phenomenal character. Since such an approach is designed to explain differences within the phenomenal character without changes in the representational content, it can also maintain that phenomenal properties are not entirely representational. I think, however, that we can do without those rather mysterious properties. The self, in the above sense, seems to achieve similar results. Since the latter view seems to me naturally more plausible, I will focus on this strategy without discarding the alternative's possibility. For discussion on relational properties see e.g. Shoemaker 1994a, b, 2000.

whether or not it justifies those initial claims. If approved – as a second step – one should discuss the implications and evaluate if the consequences of this view are reasonable.

By assuming that phenomenal properties consist in subjective properties and qualitative properties, it seems only natural to assume also that both are closely related. In the case of phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, phenomenal properties include both qualitative properties or *Q* and an experiencing subject or *-me*. If we assume that the experiencing subject, interpreted as pre-reflective self-awareness, is a constituent of conscious experiences⁵⁰⁴, then it is not possible for a mental state to be an experience without this subject. This may be considered a minimal form of the self and therefore the experiencing subject itself. Without discussing any particular theory⁵⁰⁵ of the minimal self, we still need, at least, a short characterization. Gallagher puts phenomenological dimension of the minimal self in the following manner:

Minimal self: Phenomenologically, that is, in terms of how one experiences it, a consciousness of oneself as an immediate subject of experience, unextended in time.⁵⁰⁶

For the 'self' to be considered minimal, it is only needed that it is necessary aspects remain. All other aspects are removed. Those facts come only into play when considering the 'narrative' self, a self which includes extension over time, memories and future intentions.⁵⁰⁷ If true, one may assume that the experience always entails its experiencing subject already. The only remaining question being why we should consider the minimal self to be necessary for a conscious experience.

Based on phenomenological considerations by Gallagher and Zahavi, I have stated that pre-reflective self-awareness is a constituent of phenomenal consciousness. In my opinion, one should make the following stronger claim. Phenomenal properties entail subjective properties as an essential constituent by definition. In his famous article 'What is it like to be a bat?' Nagel writes the following:

Conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon. [...] No

⁵⁰⁴ This is the view Gallagher & Zahavi 2010 favor.

⁵⁰⁵ For detailed discussion about the minimal self see any author of footnote 502.

⁵⁰⁶ Gallagher 2000, p. 15.

⁵⁰⁷ For discussion see Gallagher 2000.

doubt it occurs in countless forms totally unimaginable to us, on other planets in other solar systems throughout the universe. But no matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience *at all* means, basically, that there is something it is like to *be* that organism. There may be further implications about the form of the experience; there may even (though I doubt it) be implications about the behavior of the organism. But fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism.⁵⁰⁸

Interestingly, in the contemporary debate in philosophy of mind it was attributed to Nagel that the mystery of qualia or phenomenal properties is to be found in the 'something it is like' and not so much that it involves an experiencing subject.⁵⁰⁹ As I understand this passage, however, it seems to be equally or even more important to *be* the subject of experience, or better the one *for* whom something is a certain way. If my interpretation is correct, then subjective properties do not only form part of the constituents of our phenomenology, they are essential to it by definition.

What about the qualitative properties? In my opinion, Nagel is pretty clear. Certain phenomenal qualities or qualitative properties are also constituents of conscious experiences. To be considered an experience does not only entail the fact that there is necessarily an experiencing subject, this subject also has to experience something the way it does. To count as an experience, therefore, it needs to involve that there is *something it is like* to experience for the subject. It seems only natural, then, to assume what phenomenal Q-*me*-ism predicts, namely that in standard cases the phenomenal entails both, subjective properties and qualitative properties. To postulate such an account is a first step in explaining how those properties are related and therefore whether or not my claim about the structure of the phenomenal is accurate. To decide the latter, however, one needs a further step. This step consists in

⁵⁰⁸ Nagel 1974, p. 436.

⁵⁰⁹ For proponents of a similar idea see footnote 485. Nida-Rümelin 2011 doubts that those proponents really introduce the experiencing subject. At this point, I try to show, however, that phenomenal Q-*me*-ism genuinely tries to do so.

an analysis of the reciprocal influence.

Now, before starting this investigation, I still want to sum up the basic ideas of this view. To claim that subjective properties and qualitative properties are both constituents of the phenomenal entails certain consequences. Since I argued that subjective properties are not representational, phenomenal properties cannot be entirely representational as a result. On the one hand, if subjective properties are present as a form of minimal self, then the experiencing subject is literally present in the phenomenal. Phenomenal *Q-me*-ism's designation for this claim is *-me*. The important implication of this assumption is that it establishes a universal condition for the existence of experiences and is therefore essential. This means that the awareness of the experiencing subject as the possessor of the experience is always present, as long as we experience.⁵¹⁰ On the other hand, I stated that qualitative properties are entirely representational. Whether or not this is true, is still to be seen. However, those properties, designated by *Q*, clearly present themselves to be variable. They consist in different kind of qualities, stemming e.g. from perception.

Now, to return to the question about what one property means to the other, consider our ontological description of the phenomenal again. Having or being an experience, according to phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, is simply the presence of the phenomenal which is constituted by qualitative properties *Q* and the experiencing subject *-me*. The first component is representational and the second one is not. At this point, however, we may assume a further important distinction, one that involves two different interpretations of quality. This distinction will clarify phenomenal *Q-me*-ism's view on qualitative properties and initiate the first step to describe the relation between those properties and the experiencing subject.

Basically, a quality manifests itself in two different ways. It can either be a quality in the objective sense or a quality in the subjective sense. An objective quality usually refers to something that is measured against some standard. Consider the following example as far as I know, the quality of a diamond depends in a big part on its clarity. If the diamond has a high degree of clarity, the diamond is considered of being of high quality as well. In this case it is not important what some particular

⁵¹⁰ Kriegel 2005 suggests something similar.

subject thinks about the diamond, either the diamond does well compared with its standard of clarity or it does not. Subjective interpretations of qualities seem to be different. They involve a subjective standpoint towards a certain quality. Consider another example. Whether or not something tastes good to me includes a subjective view on what tastes good to me. This means, it is not up to some objective standard of good taste, whether I think something tastes good, it is up to me. In the case of phenomenal properties, it seems to me that both approaches apply, maybe at a more primitive level.

Imagine, therefore, that I have a red experience. To have this kind of experience means in one sense that some red quality is present. It also means, in a second sense, that there is some subjective view about this quality involved. On the one hand, it seems, therefore, that we can objectively compare different kinds of red hues. This is actually something we often do. By stating that something is bordeaux or flame red, we locate the specific red quality on a somewhat standardized scale. On the other hand, it seems that the red experience contains also the red quality as having a subjective aspect. It entails that the red quality is a certain way for me. It seems that no objective scale can tell me how such a red experience is sensed *by me*. This seems to depend on me, the subject of experience.

The problematic interpretation is the latter, the subjective aspect of quality. Still, it is usually not the same to think of something tasting good and sensing red in a particular subjective way. The first quality entails the second plus an assignment of some value to the experience. More importantly however, both cases are grounded by how a quality is sensed *by me*. On a lower level of experiencing, they can, therefore, be treated as equal. The remaining question is about what we can conclude from this analysis. In my opinion, the answer is along these lines. Phenomenal redness needs the instantiation of a red quality in the objective sense, that is to say a representation of that quality.⁵¹¹ It, however, also needs that this red quality is present in its 'first-person mode of givenness', this means as a quality that is experienced *by me*. The latter is what subjective properties add to the former, and does not involve representations. As

⁵¹¹ This does not mean that there really is a red object, since I could have a hallucination. It means, however, that there is a red-object-representation, no matter whether or not it is true that there is also a red object in the world.

I argued above, those properties cannot be representational because they include pre-reflective self-awareness and therefore a minimal form of the self. I hope that it became clear why qualitative properties are purely representational. They are representational because they simply represent qualities in the objective sense. As a consequence we may, however, ask ourselves what exactly the minimal self contributes.

If this description is correct, then phenomenal properties are in part non-representational. This is the case, since the phenomenal entails subjective properties. Qualitative properties are entirely exhausted by their representational character. This means, what gives qualities in the objective sense its experiential character stems from the subjective properties an experience possesses. So far many descriptions were used to characterize these subjective properties. At this point, it seems, however, reasonable to refine what their role within an experience is. I claimed that subjective properties may be described as pre-reflective self-awareness. This awareness constitutes a minimal form of the self that is experiential in character. I also claimed that this may be expressed as the 'first-person mode of givenness' of some quality that is experienced by me. Since I abandoned the position that the minimal self has to be some basic entity that possesses consciousness, but is rather located within consciousness itself, the subjectivity of experience arises here. A consequence of this approach is that the self or the subject of a conscious experience is already experiential and therefore the origin of the experiential character of experience. This means, what makes one's experiencing what it is, is essentially oneself.

That experiencing something is essentially tied to the self does not mean that an experience only depends on oneself. Experiences are usually *about* something. This means, even if experiencing arises from the instantiation of subjective properties, phenomenal properties commonly need qualitative properties as well. Those latter properties may be representational, they shape, however, the kind of experience we are having. Above all, representational qualitative properties are usually of the highest importance for the appearance of subjective properties. On the contrary to the latter, it is normal for qualitative properties to be instantiated in mental states different from experiences. It seems no wild speculation that e.g. unconscious mental states employ

qualities, they simply pass without being noticed consciously. Those states still play a role in the economy of our mental life; even we do not become aware of them. Apart from conscious experiences, however, subjective properties normally do not arise. Since those properties can only be present when we are experiencing, they are closely connected to experiences themselves. In the ordinary formation of an experience, then, qualitative properties often invoke subjective properties and therefore the phenomenal.

I want to disarm an obvious criticism at this point. The view that phenomenal properties are composed the way I claim may lead to a concern that arises from Nida-Rümelin's initial distinction.⁵¹² As considered above, Nida-Rümelin claims that there are two basic manners we can interpret the structure of experiences, namely *being* an experience or *having* an experience. In the former case phenomenal properties form part of the experience, in the latter of the experiencing subject. I claimed so far that phenomenal Q-*me*-ism in a sense accommodates both claims. After characterizing my view, however, the suspicion prevails that, since I assume the minimal self to be experiential in character, it forms part of the experience and therefore is a property of the experience itself. I also explicitly claimed something similar above. But, how can that be? On the one hand, in this interpretation of the minimal self, the self is the origin of experiencing an experience, so strictly speaking it gives the experience its experiential character. On the other hand, this minimal self is, in my opinion, the real deal. It is an authentic form of the self that, even adding the experiencing, is where the experience is located. Therefore, the self, in a sense, has the experience. This may not satisfy Nida-Rümelin, since she thinks that an experience presupposes a subject as entity⁵¹³, but I hope to have shown that this does not have to be the case.

At this point, we may want to consider the implications of this view and whether or not those describe experiences in an appropriate way. One implication is that phenomenal Q-*me*-ism might make sense when talking about visual perception. Having a red experience may, at a first glance, be considered to involve representational qualitative properties. Pain, however, is often considered to be

⁵¹² See Nida-Rümelin 2007a.

⁵¹³ See Nida-Rümelin 2011.

different.⁵¹⁴ Even though there are common sense ideas about the location of pain in certain body parts, it seems more natural to assume that pain is a private matter. This means that, apart from the one in pain, no one else has epistemic access to it. It may, however, be worst. Unlike a red sensation, which may be present even when we are not consciously aware of it, pain seems to depend on our awareness of it. Pain that is not consciously present seems, therefore, to be no pain. In a famous passage Kripke states the following:

To be in the same epistemic situation that would obtain if one had a pain *is* to have a pain; to be in the same epistemic situation that would obtain in the absence of pain *is* not to have a pain [...]. Pain [...] is not picked out by one of its accidental properties; rather it is picked out by its immediate phenomenological quality [...]. If any phenomenon is picked out in exactly the same way that we pick out pain, then that phenomenon *is* pain.⁵¹⁵

How can phenomenal *Q-me*-ism deal with this problem? First of all, I think that Kripke is right in pointing out that pain is a phenomenal quality. In terms of phenomenal *Q-me*-ism that is the qualitative property, or Q. I stated that Q is representational, which means it is entirely constituted by the content of experience. This, however, seems to be the contrary of what Kripke claims, since he also assumes that the phenomenal pain quality is immediate. I will leave this issue open for just a moment to first discuss what the problem of a representational account of pain is and how I think it can be solved. Hopefully this way I can come back to Kripke's claim and show that phenomenal *Q-me*-ism agrees with his view.

Now, in the case of pain the representational account suggests that what is represented is tissue damage. Aydede points out that two problems arise from this idea. The first issue is connected to strong transparency. If true, then pain is only tissue damage. It seems, however, that pain also includes an 'affective-emotional'⁵¹⁶ component, namely that it hurts. The representationalist seems to ignore this fact. The

⁵¹⁴ For extensive discussion of the matter see Aydede 2013.

⁵¹⁵ Kripke 1980, pp. 152-153.

⁵¹⁶ Aydede 2013, § 4.3.

second problem stems from the assumption that a pain representation represents tissue damage. When we, however, refer to this tissue damage, we do not literally state that there is tissue damage, we refer to the pain experience. This is called the problem of focus.⁵¹⁷ In short, representationalism treats both problems the same. It assumes strong transparency and claims that *all* aspects of phenomenal properties are representational. Phenomenal *Q-me*-ism denies this claim and takes the issue seriously.

Since, in the first case, we should assume that tissue damage is also present in its 'first-person mode of givenness' or better involves the experiencing subject, one would expect that a pain experience hurts. What stems from the subject or the self is its experiential character or that we are experiencing. Hurt, then, is the 'first-person mode of givenness' of pain. To put it differently: the self is experiencing pain in a hurtful way.

The second issue can be avoided by phenomenal *Q-me*-ism in a straight forward manner. The theory predicts that one obviously focuses on the experience. This means, one focuses on experiencing or better on what is given to the experiencing subject with experiential character. Since this way of referring to tissue damage involves the way it is for the subject, i.e. the experiential character of pain is psychologically present for the subject, the impact of this psychological aspect, or hurting, is more immediate than the tissue damage.

In my opinion, these solutions build the backbone to maintain that what Kripke asserts is correct. Especially the explanation of the second issue clarifies why pain is immediately experiential and therefore depends on its phenomenal quality. This, however, does not mean that one has to interpret Kripke in a way that does not allow for any constituent of a phenomenal property to be representational. It is only necessary that not all components are representational to maintain that pain is essentially phenomenal. It is therefore not problematic that qualitative properties are entirely representational; they just have to be supplemented with subjective properties.

⁵¹⁷ For detailed discussion see Aydede 2013.

Before continuing to discuss any issue raised by phenomenal Q-*me*-ism, I want to say something about the representations involved in phenomenal qualities. In the context of the previous issue, we have seen that representations may be quite different. At first, I discussed the question of whether or not qualitative properties are representational by introducing an example from visual perception. Only after that, I considered bodily sensations. It seems obvious to me that, even though both cases include representations, they are not of the same type. The difference may be put as follows: visual perception has representations about the world states, and bodily sensations have representations about the body states. Our representational system works with both. This may be one possible explanation for the differences in our experiences.⁵¹⁸

There is a second question that arises when assuming phenomenal Q-*me*-ism. A phenomenal Q-*me*-ist has to answer the standard metaphysical arguments⁵¹⁹ of the consciousness debate. Without providing a detailed answer, at this point, I want to focus on why the appearance of those arguments seems natural in this framework. This means, I am less concerned with what phenomenal Q-*me*-ism has to say about these issues, and rather with how this view explains their occurrence.

Now, consider the knowledge argument first. As we have seen, the basic idea of the argument is that Mary the super-scientist was locked in a room that contained no color whatsoever. Even though she learned everything physical there is to know about color vision, until she leaves the room and actually sees the first time e.g. a rose, she does not know everything there is to know about color. This argument is designed to show that physicalism is false. If phenomenal Q-*me*-ism is true, it becomes clear why this issue arises. Even if Mary knows everything about color representations⁵²⁰, she still cannot know what they are like *for her*. This is the case, because she never had a color experience and therefore no experience composed in the relevant sense. It is true that

⁵¹⁸ At this point, many interesting questions arise; e.g. what is the difference between a representation about the world and one about the body? How do these different types of representation influence our experiences? And, can representations be of a mixed type? Even though these issues have important consequences for how we think about experiences, it surpasses the scope of this investigation. It, therefore, has to be left for a different occasion.

⁵¹⁹ I consider the standard arguments being 8) – 10) in chapter one. This may not exhaust all possible metaphysical arguments of the consciousness debate, but it includes most contemporary problems of the field.

⁵²⁰ This follows from the idea that she learned everything physical there is to know about color vision.

she had experiences which do not include colors and therefore she knows something about experiences in general. But she never had a qualitative color property instantiated in the relevant subjective sense, so all her knowledge about colors misses the experiential character. In short, the right *me* function containing red was never instantiated, so she lacks phenomenal knowledge about it. For that reason, it is natural to assume that she cannot have experiential color knowledge before having the relevant experience⁵²¹ and therefore no miracle that the scenario of the knowledge argument arises.

In my opinion, the case of the explanatory gap is somewhat related to this last idea. This argument claims that there is supposed to be an unbridgeable gap between physical descriptions of a person's experience and phenomenal descriptions of the same experience. According to phenomenal *Q-me*-ism this issue stems from the problem that straight forwardly one can only describe the representational qualities in physical terms. Since subjective properties are not straight forwardly physically describable – they are essentially experiential in character to us – we therefore have the intuition that an experience cannot be described in physical terms alone. If what I said about phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is true, then this fact depends on how we can explicate the *me* function.

Finally, what does phenomenal *Q-me*-ism say about the zombie intuition? Now, the intuition is based on the idea that we can imagine a world where phenomenal zombies exist. This world is a perfect copy of our world, and the zombies are perfect copies of us – therefore they behave, utter and act the same way we do. The only thing those zombies lack are phenomenal properties. This means, for those zombies there is nothing it is like to e.g. see red. This argument – just as its former relatives – is designed to refute physicalism. To do so, it introduces one more idea, namely that the following scenario cannot be ruled out *a priori*: since this zombie world is conceivable, it is also metaphysical possible. Now, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism explains the rise of this intuition by claiming that what the zombies are missing are experiences. They still have

⁵²¹ On a side note: at this point arises an interesting question. Assuming that I already have had certain color experiences and given the composition of a color we have not seen yet, can we know how this color looks like to us without having the relevant experience? I do not have an answer for this right away, but I assume that we can, at least, figure out an approximation.

representational qualitative properties, but without experiential character. On the one hand, for phenomenal *Q-me-ism*, such a scenario is not conceivable, because the zombies would not have experiences. Therefore, they are essentially different from us. Those zombies cannot behave like us, they behave like zombies. On the other hand, it is conceivable, and even possible. This, however, implies that we are zombies as well. Since the function $me(R_Q)$ may only be some brain state, the zombie world is our world.

A final issue may follow from the relation between subjective properties and qualitative properties. So far, I claimed that they co-exist necessarily to form the phenomenal. It is, however, often assumed that highly skilled masters of meditation may reach a state that involves awareness without objects. It is claimed that they are only aware of awareness itself.⁵²² This may imply that the only properties they are aware of are subjective properties, or better, they are only pre-reflectively self-aware. In any case, those masters seem to be in a state that does not include qualitative properties. They are therefore only experiencing the experiential character which does not involve the intentional dimension of experiences or their aboutness. On the one hand, if such a state of mind is possible, this is a favorable outcome for the existence of subjective properties. It implies that those properties have an independent ontological status and therefore an authentic influence on experience. On the other hand, this means that the experiential character itself does not need qualitative properties, at least when that state is purely experiential. In my opinion, however, this is compatible with phenomenal *Q-me-ism*. First of all, it clearly confirms the existence of the proclaimed subjective properties and their experiential character. Secondly, I only described how experiences are formed in everyday life and not whether or not we can access the experiential character itself. This state of mind does not imply that there are exceptions to what an experience is; it implies that in special cases we can access the experiential character itself. It is entirely plausible to assume this consequence within the framework of phenomenal *Q-me-ism*. The conclusion being that what can be achieved in meditation is a pure form experiencing or accessing the experiential character itself, without employing the intentional content of experience. At no point, I

⁵²² For detailed discussion see Phelan 1979.

claimed that subjective properties and qualitative properties have to co-exist necessarily; I just claimed that experiences which are about something contain both properties.⁵²³

In my opinion, so far phenomenal *Q-me*-ism proved itself to be a view that naturally explains certain intuitions about experiences and their phenomenal properties: it explains the structure of the phenomenal, since it can account for intuitions about e.g. pain and similar sensations; it accounts for the appearance of the standard metaphysical arguments; and finally, it allows for non-standard cases of experiencing that arise, e.g. profound meditation. At this point, I will return to the initial problem of revelation and the following question: can *Q-me* revelation explain the privileged access and still be compatible with physicalism?

IV.4. *Q-me* revelation: a defense

To defend this account of revelation I have to solve two puzzles. I, first, have to solve the epistemological issues about the specialness of privileged self-knowledge of the phenomenal. Then, I need to show that the metaphysical problem of the revelation thesis's compatibility with physicalism does not apply to my view. For the first task, one should make use of the intuitions about the epistemic features of phenomenal properties and show how *Q-me* revelation can meet them. The second matter involves a more general approach. To show that *Q-me* revelation is compatible with physicalism is to demonstrate that it is at least in general possible to spell out phenomenal *Q-me*-ism in a physicalistic way.

⁵²³ At this point, it may be interesting to analyze what being in a state that is conscious only about consciousness itself in terms of how I described subjective properties is. Does this involve the disintegration of the minimal self? Is this the origin for the claim of no-self? Unfortunately these issues surpass the scope of this discussion and have to be left for a different occasion. For an interesting discussion about the no-self alternative see Metzinger 2011.

IV.4.1. Privileged access

I treated intuitions about the epistemological features of phenomenal properties so far in the following manner: I maintained that privileged self-knowledge about our phenomenal properties in a strong sense, entails infallibility and omniscience.⁵²⁴ This form of epistemological specialness is supposably explained by the acquaintance relation with those properties. The rebuttal of this approach however, left a) the privileged access without legitimate justification and b) an unproblematic acquaintance view as merely a synonym for the experience thesis.⁵²⁵ I disproved strong transparency, but maintain that experiences are partially representational.⁵²⁶ Finally, we will see how the fineness of grain⁵²⁷ unfolds from the defense of Q-me revelation.

As seen in the last paragraph – and the preceding chapters – the privileged access is in need of an explanation. I claimed that, since acquaintance fails, revelation may be considered the most promising alternative. After already rebutting a number of interpretations of this view – mostly on the grounds that they either entail acquaintance and/or are not compatible with the Material Constraint – I stated that the correct account is a phenomenal Q-me-ist approach to revelation or Q-me revelation. I also showed that, in the end, Q-me revelation is about the nature of experience. The thesis, therefore, states the following:

(Initial) Q-me revelation: By having an experience E with the phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know or know that E is essentially Q-me.

I argued so far that phenomenal Q-me-ism can reasonably explain phenomenal structure of our experiences. It is, however, not clear so far why Q-me revelation justifies privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal. To ground the privileged

⁵²⁴ This means more or less intuitions 2) and 3).

⁵²⁵ It further includes intuitions 1) and 6) from the list.

⁵²⁶ 4) and 5).

⁵²⁷ 7).

access contemporary acquaintance approaches claim: a) a metaphysical directness relation with our phenomenal properties and b) an epistemic directness relation with those properties.⁵²⁸ The purpose of this suggestion is to secure that the instantiated conscious phenomenal properties overlap with the grasp of those properties. In the first chapter, I argued in length that the foundation of this proposal can only be found in b). The consequence is that it must be the case that either the conscious phenomenal properties we rely on for justification enjoy an ontologically independent status or that the relation with those properties is basic in the Levineian sense. I argued, however, that, since both assumptions violate the Material Constraint, this approach should count as implausible.

Revelation in general, I think, does most of the time involve condition a) as well⁵²⁹. It also maintains the fact that we are in a special epistemic position for knowledge, namely knowledge that is infallible and omniscience, or in short certain. Its justification is usually similar to b). It depends only on the essence of the property in question which means here the essence of experiences. However, we can also find one decisive difference in this formulation. While even qualified versions of acquaintance, on the one hand, seem to be too broad and therefore fail to distinguish between what is important or essential to ground privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal, this approach has to project its plausibility by either claiming to *be* a basic relation or to be grounded *by* basic properties. Revelation, on the other hand, usually involves highly qualified views about experiences and their phenomenal properties. Since the thesis entails an essence claim, it is therefore crucial to restrict the knowledge claim accordingly.

This is due to the second determinant deviance. It stems from what the implied knowledge is about. While acquaintance tends to ground judgments about what is present in our phenomenal reality, revelation justifies knowledge about the ontological and/or metaphysical essence of experiences themselves. This means, while the acquaintance approach *only* justifies why my epistemic judgments about some

⁵²⁸ Finally, c) only claims that judgments obtained in the above sense are better justified than any empirical judgment. Since this condition does not describe the relation – it only puts the claims in the relevant epistemological perspective – there is no need to discuss this claim here. It is, therefore, in a sense – namely interpretation a) – a restatement of the privileged access intuition itself.

⁵²⁹ Revelation most of the time implies it, however, implicitly.

presence e.g. phenomenal red are special, revelation *primarily* justifies knowledge about the essence of experiences themselves in general and therefore leads to knowledge about the underlying ontological/metaphysical structure of experiences. Now, since acquaintance is principally silent about the ontology of experience, the acquaintance theorist may apply this account to justify the special epistemology of self-knowledge within a variety of ontological/metaphysical frameworks. Revelation, however, may not be applied in the same sense. Since the view implies knowledge about the ontology/metaphysics of experiences themselves, it stands and falls with the correctness of its essence claim. Even though this kind of self-knowledge is the primary concern of revelation, I claim that the thesis may justify privileged epistemic judgments about e.g. phenomenal red sensations as well.

Q-*me* revelation, then, is a view that primarily claims knowledge about the ontology/metaphysics of an experience itself. In particular, this account asserts that Q is essentially Q-*me*. The thesis therefore implies general ontological self-knowledge about the essential features – in this case Q-*me* – that constitute an experience. This is to say, if Q-*me* revelation is true, then all other features, different from Q-*me*, are only contingent or accidental to Q. I am, therefore, in a position to know or know, by having E with Q, that E is constituted by a specific phenomenological structure that entails representational or objective qualities and the experiencing subject. The remaining issue revolves around the question whether or not Q-*me* revelation can also ground epistemic privileged self-knowledge about a particular phenomenal property as well.

As stated above, justifying the right kind of epistemological situation, via Q-*me* revelation, is related to some of the reasoning implied by the acquaintance approach. However, in the case of revelation the essence claim is decisively involved. So far, I have tried to show that Q-*me* revelation puts us in a position to know or know general implications about what constitutes a phenomenal property, by simply having it. This knowledge about the ontological/metaphysical structure of the phenomenal reveals, therefore, that one of the essential properties of the phenomenal property in question is the experiencing subject. But, what makes this kind of self-knowledge, in the end, so special? The answer, I claim, can only be found in Q-*me* revelation's claim about essences, that means the idea that E is essentially Q-*me*. There has to be something

special about *Q-me* that it presents itself in the relevant manner. It may not come as a big surprise that, in my opinion, this stems from the fact that the minimal self is involved. Since we are immediately and pre-reflectively aware of ourselves as the experiencing subject for whom there is something it is like, we therefore intuitively distinguish between us, the subject of experience, and the present qualities that shape the experience. This is not to say that we become necessarily aware of an outer world – even though this may generally be the case, especially in cases of perception. Since our subjective properties, however, do not entail those experienced qualities, we become aware of them as a shaping element. This means, in a sense, pre-reflective self-awareness entails already what constitutes the experiential component of an experience, without, however, defining what kind of experience we are experiencing.

Now, the reason why pre-reflective self-awareness is special is that it constitutes the experiential. If this feature of experiences, therefore, did not exist, experiences would also not exist. To put it differently, if the subject of experience were not involved in constituting an experience, the question 'what is essential to an experience?' would not arise, since there would be none. The simple fact that we assume that there are experiences entails already the fact that there is an experiencing subject. Therefore, to be in a position to know or know something about the ontological/metaphysical structure of the subject only requires to have an experience, since without this feature I it is impossible to even assume experiences. Since experiences are, in a sense, qualified or restricted – this means, they are at least minimally shaped – we know, by having those experiences that, apart from the experiential character, there is an element that shapes this character.⁵³⁰ I claim, therefore, that anyone who has E with Q cannot fail to have *Q-me*. Since *Q-me* essentially constitutes a phenomenal property, anyone who fails to know this, even tacitly, does not know what having an experience consists in. This implies, however, she never had one.⁵³¹

⁵³⁰ At this point, this claim does not entail that we know which qualitative property is present. To put it differently, this is not a sufficient reason to argue for privileged self-knowledge about the presence of e.g. phenomenal red. It only states that some qualitative property, apart from the subjective property, is present.

⁵³¹ The fact that revelation *Q-me* expresses the possibility of ontological/metaphysical knowledge still leaves a minor question open. It may be put following way: are we 'in a position to know', or do we

Before continuing, there is an obvious objection that has to be refuted. For many who have read so far, doubt may arise about the claim that the experiencing subject is necessary for having an experience. Even though this seems phenomenologically plausible, a concern similar to Hume's⁵³² critique – later further developed by Russell⁵³³ – against Descartes's *cogito* argument⁵³⁴ may be applicable. Imagine a severe case of schizophrenia.⁵³⁵ Assuming that a patient suffers from hallucination and thinks that what she is experiencing is not her experiences but experiences induced from a different individual, e.g. an alien. Is it the case, then, that the person suffering from this terrible condition has experiences which do not entail the experiencing subject? I claim no. She may identify those experiences as someone else's experiences, i.e. she may assume that those experiences were implanted by someone else and deny, therefore, a sense of agency⁵³⁶. This explains especially well, why she experiences these experiences as alien and strange. In a sense, then, it seems to be correct that the schizophrenic does not experience her experiences as her own. However, she still experiences those strange and alienating experiences from her own point of view, or better, in her own 'first-person mode of givenness'. She maintains, therefore, a sense of ownership⁵³⁷. Both notions of the minimal self usually go hand in hand. Only in special cases, like in the case of schizophrenia, they may drift apart. To

'know' these things about the phenomenal? I have claimed in the second chapter that either option may constitute revelation. Without arguing for a detailed account, it seems, at a first glance, that revelation Q-me points to the latter. It seems that having an E with Q entails knowing that it is Q-me (even in a tacit sense). If one fails to know this, one could not even know that one has an experience. This is however only possible, if one never had had an experience. At this point, it seems, therefore, that one obtains this ontological/metaphysical knowledge by simply having an experience.

I want to point out that this is not the whole story. What was said here seems so for now! At a later stage we will see that the issue is slightly different. I will, therefore, maintain both notions until indicated differently.

⁵³² Hume argues that Descartes's argument does not lead to conclusions about one's own self. For discussion see Hume 1978.

⁵³³ Russell claims that Descartes is not justified in introducing the 'I'. He is only justified to claim that there is thinking or thoughts, but not that there is a subjective entity which is ultimately the possessor of these thoughts. See Russell 1927 and 1945.

⁵³⁴ The argument states the well-known foundation for knowledge. For extensive discussion see Descartes 1991, 1998.

⁵³⁵ This is a modified version of Gallagher's example. See Gallagher 2000.

⁵³⁶ "Sense of agency: The sense that I am the one who is causing or generating an action. For example, the sense that I am the one who is causing something to move, or that I am the one who is generating a certain thought in my stream of consciousness." (Gallagher 2000, p. 15).

⁵³⁷ "Sense of ownership: The sense that I am the one who is undergoing an experience. For example, the sense that my body is moving regardless of whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary." (Gallagher 2000, p. 15).

maintain the notion of minimal self, in the case of conscious experiences, the sense of ownership is, however, enough. All that was exposed here is, of course, not to say anything about what causes of this disturbance and also not on what level of mental life it is caused. I picked the example only to show that even in extreme cases, having an experience needs a subject, minimal as it may be, that experiences.

Since the precious example may have been controversial to support my argument, a different example may be more appropriate. Imagine that engineering makes it possible to connect my mind, via wireless technology, with the mind of another person. This means, I have access to all kinds of mental states, including what that person experiences. Now, this raises the question whether or not I could genuinely experience the other person's experience as their experience. To put it differently, by accessing her experience am I capable to experience her experience without being the experiencing subject of whatever it is that I may be experiencing? In my opinion, the answer has to be no. Even though I may be able to identify this experience as not being my own and attribute is, therefore, to somebody else (I am not the agent of the experience), the fact that I am experiencing that experience implies that I become aware of myself as the subject of that experience, even if it entails the other person's experience (I still have a sense of ownership). Basically, this means that to experience one has to employ one's own 'first-person mode of givenness' or one does not experience at all.

Now, assuming that this is true, and *Q-me* revelation justifies the privileged access to ontological/metaphysical knowledge, it is still not clear whether or not this fact guarantees, for concrete judgments about phenomenal properties, to have this kind of access as well. At a first glance, it seems somewhat strange to raise this issue. Since *Q-me* revelation already enables knowledge about the ontological and/or metaphysical structure of the phenomenal, one should expect that this view justifies privileged epistemic knowledge about e.g. phenomenal red. Knowledge about the ontological/metaphysical structure of phenomenal properties is knowledge about what defines the phenomenal in general. To put it differently, it tells us which features are necessary for something to count as an experience, and nothing else.⁵³⁸ Knowledge

⁵³⁸ See Lewis 1995 for this condition.

about a particular phenomenal quality is, however, different. It entails in part knowledge about what particular qualitative property is present when I have a certain experience with a specific phenomenal property. Imagine I have a red experience with the relevant phenomenal property instantiated, then, to count as privileged self-knowledge about that particular experience, or more precisely about the phenomenal red quality, there has to be a justification that my judgment about the phenomenal red quality is certain. This is, however, not to say that in any particular instance of a different experience the justification is different. There simply needs to be some reason why in general I am in the position to know or know with certainty which phenomenal quality is present. I hope it became clear that the difference of both kinds of knowledge involved lies in their claims, and not their knowledge type. To sum up, knowledge about the ontological/metaphysical structure of the phenomenal in general and knowledge about what phenomenal quality of experience is in a particular case present is not one and the same thing.

Since the propositional knowledge employed in both cases is different in its intentional dimension, the question remains whether or not *Q-me* revelation can justify privileged self-knowledge about a particular presence of an experience's phenomenal quality. It may, however, even get worse. From the words I have chosen, the reader may already have guessed that this issue partly concerns whether or not there is also a privileged access to our representational qualitative properties. This, however, is a delicate matter. If what I have said so far is correct, those properties depend solely on the objects of experience. They are qualities in the objective sense. The worry, then, may be that by having an experience, qualitative properties of the outer world may be revealed. This, however, means that I could gain knowledge in an 'uncommonly demanding sense' about the external world. Therefore, I would be in a privileged epistemic position to obtain knowledge about properties in the external world. From what I have said, it should have become clear that claiming *Q-me* revelation to also be the reason for privileged self-knowledge about the presence of an experience's particular phenomenal quality is not an easy task.

As a consequence, it seems necessary to analyze whether or not *Q-me* revelation can fulfill this duty. The trivial reason is that if *Q-me* revelation does not

ground such an approach; the problem about privileged knowledge of the external world does not even arise. So far I have claimed that *Q-me* revelation justifies knowledge about the ontological/metaphysical structure of experiences. This includes that one is in the position to know or know that *E* is essentially *Q-me*. The reason we know of *Q*'s presents in this conjunction is determined by *-me*. This means, by being in a state of pre-reflective self-awareness, which already is experiential in character, we immediately notice that we are not only experiencing indeterminately, but that something is experienced. This dimension of the phenomenal is essentially determined by the presence of qualitative properties or *Q*. Now, the question is whether or not I can know about those particular phenomenal qualities present in our experiences. The answer is either yes or no. To decide which scenario is more likely, we should consider the different interpretations of quality again. On the one hand, if we interpret the question to entail objective qualities, i.e. whether or not e.g. a red quality is *bordeaux* or *flaming red* on a standardized color scale, then the expected answer should be no. On the other hand, if one refers to the subjective aspect, i.e. how e.g. a certain red quality is sensed *by me*, then the expected answer is yes.

What, however, distinguishes both cases? In the first reading, we assume that a judgment is about whether or not *Q* is red in a particular case. Since *Q* is exhausted by its representational properties, it is an objective quality. The second interpretation refers to how red is sensed *by me*. The question is, therefore, not about the objective quality *Q*, but about the subjective quality *Q-me* – or in this case *red-me* – which is the phenomenal property of that particular – red – experience. Since the present red quality is united with the present experiential character, or better it is inseparable from the subject of experiencing, one is in a position to know *red-me* or more accurately *me(R_{red})* with certainty.⁵³⁹ This has an interesting consequence, which was already stated to be an intuition about experiences in general. While objective qualities are easy to classify on some kind of objective scale, subjective qualities, being phenomenal, are extremely fine in grain. The reason is that, while the former classify or group colors with similar hues in more coarse grained classes, the latter assort

⁵³⁹ This stems from the fact that phenomenal *Q-me*-ism inherits certain assumptions from classical adverbialism. In this case, we might interpret the situation in a Sellarsian way. This means, *Q-me* is ontologically not a conjunction of a subjective property and a separate qualitative property, they are ontologically *one* property only.

differences in color experiences via their experiential character, i.e. always as one particular experience different from another.⁵⁴⁰

The explanation in the previous paragraph already entails the answer to the concern that, if *Q-me* revelation justifies the privileged epistemic position for self-knowledge about particular phenomenal properties, it also reveals knowledge about the external world. Since *Q-me* revelation, however, only justifies privileged access to phenomenal qualities and therefore *Q-me*, it does not justify privileged knowledge about representational, objective qualities *Q*. One way to ground the latter may include a direct realist account of perception⁵⁴¹. *Q-me* revelation is silent about this issue. Due to phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, it can be the case that *Q* is entirely determined by the objects of experience and therefore representational. Still, the thesis asserts knowledge about *Q-me* and therefore about phenomenal properties of experience that are in part non-representational. This follows, since the latter property is not identical to the former. Attaching the subject of experience, in its experiential and pre-reflective form, is not simply an add-on to representational qualities, an entirely new process is created, namely an experience. The fact that representational qualities *Q* are somehow involved does not mean that there is change when integrated.

In my opinion, then, *Q-me* revelation is a solid justification for the privileged access to particular phenomenal properties. Therefore, if my argumentation is correct this view grounds special epistemic position in a double sense. We have privileged self-knowledge about the ontological/metaphysical structure of the phenomenal, on the one hand, and about particular phenomenal properties, on the other hand. Therefore, in my opinion, this approach can count as an authentic alternative to explain privileged self-knowledge. The remaining question is whether or not it is compatible with physicalism as well.

⁵⁴⁰ At this point, two interesting questions arise. Since I have assumed that this is a form of certain self-knowledge about the phenomenal, one may ask what kind of concepts this involves. Do we employ e.g. recognitional concepts or indexical concepts, etc. For discussion about this issue see e.g. proponents in footnotes 361 and 421. A second, more radical question may be whether experiences involve concepts or if they are non-conceptual, making it, therefore, difficult to classify them. For proponents of non-conceptual content see e.g. Bermúdez 1998, 2007; Evans 1982 and Peacock 1992. For an account of conscious experience see especially Tye 1995, 2000 and 2005. For criticism see e.g. Brewer 1999, 2005 and McDowell 1994, 1995. For reasons of space, I will not be able to discuss both issues here.

⁵⁴¹ For discussion about the issue in the context of pain see Aydede 2013.

IV.4.2. Compatibility with physicalism

To evaluate this approach to privileged self-knowledge, the decisive question is whether or not this view is compatible with physicalism. As an alternative, a persuasive argument why anti-physicalism explains this epistemic privileged position may be considered as well. Now, the reason we are still in need of a justification – assuming that there is privileged access to our own phenomenal properties – is because of the breakdown of the most popular and promising approach, namely acquaintance. To remind the reader, what we would expect from a view that grounds privileged access is that it explains the difference between standard epistemological positions and the privileged one without falling back on mysterious claims. In the first chapter, I argued in detail why acquaintance does not provide such an explanation. The view, or so I claimed, basically violates the Material Constraint by either introducing a basic relation or a basic property in the Levineian sense. To claim that *Q-me* revelation is in a better position, however, is to claim one of two things. Either *Q-me* revelation explains what a basic relation or property consists in or it is compatible with physicalism.

In my opinion, we should discard the first option for now. There is, in my opinion, no straight forward manner in which *Q-me* revelation explains the introduction of a basic relation or property. To explain how some new property or relation fits in an otherwise physical universe goes beyond the scope of what is claimed here. This is not say that such a metaphysical undertaking is impossible. It is, however, simpler to decide on the basis of an already established framework, or the Material Constraint, the success or failure of this view. This means, if I can show that *Q-me* revelation *is* compatible with physicalism, there is, at least, no problem with mysterious entities.

To decide whether or not *Q-me* revelation and the resulting view, phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, are compatible with physicalism, we may consider three options. The key question, in both cases, will be whether or not the existence of pre-reflective self-awareness violates the Material Constraint. This means, for *Q-me* revelation and

phenomenal Q-*me*-ism to be compatible with physicalism, it is necessary that our pre-reflective self-awareness, or better the subject of experience, is already consistent with this metaphysical view.

A first approximation to make sense of the physical integration of the minimal self is via embodiment⁵⁴²; a second attempt tries to reflectively expatiate the pre-reflective minimal self via introspection⁵⁴³; finally, a third strategy concentrates on the idea that pre-reflective self-awareness can only arise, if the right kind of representational mechanism is instantiated.⁵⁴⁴ All three views have their merit. To show how we may integrate those subjective properties into the physical world, I will exemplify, in general terms, the important claims of all three views and evaluate whether or not there is hope of success.

I will start with the third approach. Now, Levine characterizes self-representationalism in the following way:

Perhaps what is special about the kind of representation involved in being aware of one's sensory states is that it is that very state that is representing itself, not a distinct state as in standard versions of higher-order theory.⁵⁴⁵

This approach is especially construed to deal with the two aspects of phenomenal properties, namely the qualitative and the subjective properties. In this view, qualities are exhausted by sensory states of which we become aware in a subjective sense. The reason is that those states are representing themselves. From Levine's description we can infer that this view implies a one-level account of consciousness.

Now, a thesis that in general terms may count as self-representationalist usually assumes that there are phenomenal or sensory qualities – or 'what it is like'. It also accepts that there is a subject of experience or a 'for me'. Apart from distinguishing the two different types of properties involved, however, it is necessary for a self-representationalist approach to claim that the subject is *aware of* those

⁵⁴² For proponents see e.g. Bermúdez 1998 and Neisser 1988.

⁵⁴³ The main proposal is defended by Strawson. See Strawson 1997, 1999a, b.

⁵⁴⁴ A detailed account is suggested by Kriegel. See Kriegel 2003a, b, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009a, b for discussion.

⁵⁴⁵ Levine 2006, p. 178.

qualities.⁵⁴⁶ This latter claim is not any different from a similar assumption in higher-order theory. The decisive difference is how both views describe the phenomenal reality. Consider the following case. I claimed so far that by having a red experience, I also experience myself in a pre-reflective manner. At least, this seems to be the case. On the one hand, higher-order theory allows for both components to be the objects of awareness, it fails however to integrate them. This means it fails to account for the intertwined relation that those acts enjoy. On the other hand, a one-level, self-representationalist account seems to cover this issue straight forwardly.⁵⁴⁷ Kriegel states this difference in the following way:

Like higher-order representationalists, self-representationalists hold that conscious states are necessarily represented. But unlike higher-order representationalists, they hold that conscious states are always *consciously* represented.⁵⁴⁸

The essential claim of self-representationalism, then, is that a mental state becomes phenomenally conscious not only by representing the representational qualities determined by the objects of experience, but also by representing itself.

This self-representational model, however, has attracted much criticism. One main critique stems from the problem of 'intimacy'. In this case, intimacy is the special link between a conscious state and its apprehension. To put it differently, since it is not clear how physical significance translates into cognitive significance, it is doubtful that self-representationalism accounts for something like an acquaintance relation.⁵⁴⁹ A further major problem is whether or not qualitative properties are not puzzling as well. This means, we may consider it also a mystery how a red quality arises from some physical structure.⁵⁵⁰ A third crucial issue criticizes that the subject has to be aware of those conscious states. This, however, degrades conscious states to simple objects of awareness, in the same sense that e.g. a red ball is.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁶ For detailed reasoning see e.g. Kriegel 2009a, b.

⁵⁴⁷ See Levine 2006.

⁵⁴⁸ Kriegel 2009b, p. 359.

⁵⁴⁹ Proponents of this argument include e.g. Levine 2006 and Van Gulick 2012.

⁵⁵⁰ For discussion see e.g. Brogaard 2012.

⁵⁵¹ There are different versions of this argument. Nida-Rümelin thinks that the mistake of the self-representationalist lies in the presupposition that conscious awareness essentially involves being

Even though all those critiques are clearly justified, I will concentrate on what I think is the general problem. This issue is closely related to the last criticism. According to Zahavi, pre-reflective self-consciousness may be interpreted as “[...] (i) an extraordinary object-consciousness or (ii) not as an object-consciousness at all [...].”⁵⁵² The former notion follows Brentano's path, who thinks that consciousness has two intentional objects, the latter Husserl's, who claims that pre-reflective self-consciousness is an intrinsic feature.⁵⁵³ Interestingly, self-representationalists are bound to promote an account in the former tradition. If views of the latter kind, therefore, are more plausible, then self-representationalism fails and with it an attempt to explain the compatibility of *Q-me* revelation with physicalism.

I have to admit that, so far, I have assumed a view that interprets pre-reflective self-consciousness not in the sense of object-consciousness. The motivation for an object-consciousness account lies, according to Zahavi, in Brentano's idea that conscious perception entails two intentional objects. One of those objects is what is perceived and the other one perception itself. Since we are talking about a one-level account here, both objects form part of a single mental state.⁵⁵⁴ This means that the awareness involved in becoming conscious of the perception itself, also becomes conscious of what the perception is about. If self-representationalism is construed in that manner, then it is subject to a critique that was already applied to higher-order theories, namely that it leads to a vicious regress.⁵⁵⁵ According to Zahavi, the argument may be put the following manner:

Brentano takes every psychical phenomenon to be characterized by a double intentional relation. Every experience has a primary object, and in addition, it has itself—in its totality—as its own secondary object. Thus, the secondary object of consciousness must encompass not only the

phenomenally presented with some entity. Gertler, however, shows an alternative and argues that it better fits reality. For detailed discussion see Gertler 2012b and Nida-Rümelin 2011.

⁵⁵² Zahavi 2006, p. 1.

⁵⁵³ See Zahavi 2006 for detailed discussion.

⁵⁵⁴ This is contrary to a higher-order model of consciousness. The latter account implies that two different objects need two different mental states.

⁵⁵⁵ For this kind of criticism of higher-order theory see e.g. Carruthers 2011. For detailed discussion Rowlands 2001. This form of criticism applied to Brentano's account stems from Gurwitsch 1941 and is discussed in Zahavi 2006.

consciousness of the primary object, but also the consciousness of this consciousness. But as Gurwitsch points out, this is not where it ends. For the very same reason every intentional consciousness of a primary object must in addition include itself as its own secondary object, every intentional consciousness of a secondary object must in addition include itself as its own tertiary object, and so forth.⁵⁵⁶

If true, self-representationalism fails because it construes consciousness as *only* entailing intentional objects. This solution for the compatibility problem with physicalism is, therefore, bound to fail. This means that this model is also of no help to naturalize pre-reflective self-consciousness, phenomenal *Q-me-ism* and *Q-me* revelation. Interestingly, this is not the only problem of self-representationalism. I construed phenomenal *Q-me-ism* in a way that it entails a different understanding of pre-reflective self-consciousness. The emphasis of phenomenal *Q-me-ism* and *Q-me* revelation lies on the fact that pre-reflective self-awareness is subjective and experiential in character. Self-representationalism, however, cannot explain this fact. This last issue has also problematic implications for an explanation of the privileged access. Phenomenal *Q-me-ism* explains the privileged access by the fact that pre-reflective self-awareness is subjective and not simply another intentional object. This means, by adopting self-representationalism, we are also bound to explain the privileged access in a different way, making it *prima facie* impossible to merge both views. This last remark, therefore, leaves me no choice but to explore an alternative.

The alternative I am proposing is a hybrid of the other two options. The first position, states that pre-reflective self-awareness may be explained by embodiment⁵⁵⁷. Without exemplifying a detailed approach here, the basic idea of this type theory is based on the view that pre-reflective self-consciousness is independent from conceptual capacities and therefore non-conceptual⁵⁵⁸. Gallagher shows that

⁵⁵⁶ Zahavi 2006, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁷ For detailed discussion on embodiment see Varela et al. 1994.

⁵⁵⁸ For an account of non-conceptual content of conscious experience see Tye 1995, 2000, 2005. For a specific evaluation of the problem of non-conceptual pre-reflective self-awareness see Bermúdez 1998.

psychological studies of neonatal imitation⁵⁵⁹ lead to the view that neonates already implement a pre-reflective self-consciousness that constitutes a minimal self. This self is not based on concepts, but on embodiment.

He bases this interpretation on the fact that infants, less than one hour after birth, are already capable to imitate other human beings. Gallagher, therefore, concludes that the infant must be capable to do at least the following three things:

- 1) distinguish between self and non-self; (2) locate and use certain parts of its own body proprioceptively, without vision; and (3) recognize that the face it sees is of the same kind as its own face [...].⁵⁶⁰

If true, then the subjective, pre-reflective self-awareness is constituted by innate, embodied brain processes which are ecologically qualified.

Now, the second option tries – via introspection – to explicitly grasp the main aspects of pre-reflective self-consciousness and make them conceptually available. In this case, one starts with the experience itself and, according to Gallagher⁵⁶¹, ends up naturally with the description of the pre-reflective self. One important idea implies that this view is not restricted to humans. Since we can suppose that higher animals, aliens or maybe even machines have experiences, this notion of the self applies. This is due to the fact that the self is a decisive feature of experience. This notion, of course, does not entail embodiment to be essential to pre-reflective self-consciousness, it rather approaches the issue from a conceptual point of view, already entailing a concept of the 'self'. As a consequence, theories adopting this strategy are always in need to defend themselves against the charge of anti-physicalism. Since physical concepts are not essential to pre-reflective self-consciousness *a priori*, one has to introduce *a posteriori* reasoning for the truth of physicalism.

Both views, by themselves, have their merit. The former naturally situates pre-reflective self-awareness in the space of the physical by locating it in innate, embodied brain processes, while the latter opens the door for analysis. Phenomenal *Q-me*-ism, in

⁵⁵⁹ For the actual studies see Meltzoff & Moore 1977, 1983.

⁵⁶⁰ Gallagher 2000, p. 17.

⁵⁶¹ Gallagher assigns this approach to the self explicitly to Strawson. For detailed discussion see Gallagher 2000.

a sense, naturally subscribes to the second view by giving an analysis of experience. This account concludes that the subjective character with its experiential character, or better the subject of experience, forms an essential part of the phenomenal. Since the remaining concern is whether or not *Q-me* revelation is also compatible with physicalism, we need to know, if phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is reconcilable with a theory of embodiment.

At a first glance, it seems to be the case that phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is compatible with embodiment. Embodiment shows that pre-reflective self-consciousness is realized by human infants already at a very early stage, therefore bounding it physically. This is not to say that embodiment explains, in a detailed fashion, how this instantiation works, this fact alone is, however, sufficient. Basically this means, if embodiment is correct, then, at least, pre-reflective self-awareness is non-conceptual, innate, embodied and qualified by its surrounding. Phenomenal *Q-me*-ism can accept this view – especially that we already possess pre-reflective self-awareness as a starting point, without forming concepts about it – and adds an analysis about how this form of minimal self is integrated within the phenomenal. Privileged epistemology, finally, is based on *Q-me* revelation which reveals phenomenal *Q-me*-ism as the right ontology of that phenomenal and grounds the privileged access to phenomenal properties via this knowledge of the ontological structure.

So far goes an optimistic story about *Q-me* revelation and what it reveals. There are, however, at least two problems. The first issue concerns the positive analysis of Gallagher's embodied minimal self. The second, and more troubling problem, is whether or not *Q-me* revelation should reveal embodiment as well.

The first concern may be interpreted as fundamental critique of any realist account of the 'self'. Following Metzinger⁵⁶², it is not necessarily a fact that the self we so often assume is realistic. There is a no-self alternative. Metzinger concludes that there are four strategies to ground any anti-realist view about the self. Being an anti-realist, therefore, means: a) to deny that the self is a substance; b) to dispute the alternative view that the self cannot be known, since it is an intrinsic property of an

⁵⁶² See especially Metzinger 2009, 2010.

individual (or better, be agnostic about such a claim); c) to claim that no scientific approach to self-consciousness is in need of the 'self'; or d) to deny that the indexical 'I' refers to an ontological independent object. He himself tries to scatter doubts about the self by showing why the no-self alternative usually strikes us as counterintuitive, just to demonstrate how this kind of argumentation goes wrong. To do so, Metzinger introduces the difference between phenomenal necessity and metaphysical necessity. He claims that while, phenomenologically speaking, we cannot conceive of worlds where selves do not exist, it is still not metaphysically necessary that they do. The reason, or so he claims, is that it is simply a functional fact that we cannot conceive of worlds where no selves exist, but first-person perspective is still possible. This, however, is a purely contingent matter of the structural organization of our brain, and therefore, cannot amount to metaphysical, but only to phenomenological necessity.⁵⁶³

Striking as this problem may be, the question should turn to whether or not this has any influence on the discussion about pre-reflective self-consciousness? And the answer is no. Admittedly, I have assumed that pre-reflective self-awareness is the real deal, meaning a minimal form of the self. For me, this is rather a figure of speech, nothing depends on it. Metzinger criticizes complete self-models, or better, a self as independent fundamental ontological entity. At this point of Gallagher's analysis, this is, in my opinion, not the issue. Even assuming that there is no such 'self'⁵⁶⁴, there is still a first-person perspective. For my purpose, as long as we can assume a first-person perspective or a subject of experience – may it just be an 'EGO-mode'⁵⁶⁵ - in the form of pre-reflective self-consciousness⁵⁶⁶, it is of no importance whether or not this establishes a form of self.

The second concern, about the necessity of embodiment being revealed, however, constitutes a real threat for *Q-me* revelation. This is the case due to two interrelated issues. On the one hand, it concerns the all over shadowing problem of the compatibility with physicalism, and on the other hand, whether revelation only

⁵⁶³ For detailed discussion see Metzinger 2011.

⁵⁶⁴ What is assumed here is some cognitive subjective structure that is: a) part of the stream of consciousness; and b) the subject of experience. No explicit 'self entity' is necessary to fulfill this function.

⁵⁶⁵ Metzinger 2011, p. 286.

⁵⁶⁶ Self-consciousness is explicitly allowed in anti-realist views about the self.

requires knowledge that *this Q is F* and F is, as a matter of fact, the essence of Q, or if it requires knowledge that *F is the essence of Q*.

Stoljar discusses the question, whether revelation relies on *de re* knowledge (the former possibility) or *de dicto* knowledge (the latter possibility), in detail. He concludes that revelation has to include *de dicto* knowledge. The following is what he thinks about the issue: (This passage is embedded in the context of discussing whether or not Kripke⁵⁶⁷ relies on revelation in his comprehension of pain.)

[T]o understanding pain is to have a certain kind of *de re* knowledge, that is, it is to know *de re of* some type of experience that is pain. But on that interpretation Kripke is evidently *not* relying on revelation. The reason is that (where *F* is the essence of pain) revelation is *not* the doctrine that if one has an experience one knows *of F*, that pain is it. It is rather the doctrine that, if one has an experience, one knows *that pain is F*. That is, revelation does not involve *de re* knowledge of a property that is *in fact* the essence of the experience. It involves *de dicto* knowledge that one's experience has that property.⁵⁶⁸

The explication of this thought is given by Lewis:

[...] there is no reason to deny that the broad, *de re* content of my knowledge does, in the strongest sense, identify the qualia. Hitherto, I have been denying that the narrow *de se* and *de dicto* content of my knowledge identifies the qualia. But broad content is constituted partly by my narrow *de se* self-ascriptions involving acquaintance, partly by the identity of the objects of acquaintance. Thus I may, know *de re* of Fred that he is a burglar, but without in any sense identifying Fred. Likewise I may know *de re* of a certain physical property that it is among the qualia of my present experience, but without identifying

⁵⁶⁷ The discussed passage is taken from Kripke 1980, p. 152.

⁵⁶⁸ Stoljar 2009, p. 129.

the property in question.⁵⁶⁹

This type of knowledge says, in short, the following:

Knowledge that property F and F is essential.

The conclusion is that I may know *de re* that some property forms part of the type of phenomenal properties of an experience, but I cannot identify it as the essence. In a sense then, one could ask whether or not it is necessary to have *de dicto* knowledge of the property in question for a thesis to count as revelation.

Lihoreau⁵⁷⁰ thinks that the literature is uncommonly homogeneous in agreeing that only the *de re* interpretation of the view is needed for a thesis to count as revelation. He, however, challenges this idea. Via uncontroversial claims about the relation between essentiality/necessity and accidentality/possibility, Lihoreau shows the truth of what he calls the 'Essentiality of Essence Principle'. This principle states the following:

For any thing (or class of things) X and any proposition p, if it is essential to X that p then it is essential to X that it be essential to X that p.⁵⁷¹

According to Lihoreau, then, if this principle is applied to *de re* versions of revelation one gets *de dicto* versions as special case. He concludes, therefore, the following:

Therefore, assuming the truth of the Essentiality of Essence Principle, *Strong Revelation* is but a special case of *Weak Revelation*. In other words, if it is in the essence of a phenomenal property Q that P, the Revelation Thesis requires not only that we know P, but requires that we know P to be essential to Q as well. Hence, the agreement found in the literature on the supposedly substantial distinction between a

⁵⁶⁹ Lewis 1995, p. 143.

⁵⁷⁰ See Lihoreau 2014.

⁵⁷¹ Lihoreau 2014, p. 71.

weak and a strong version of *Revelation* is ill-grounded.⁵⁷²

This means, if we accept the Essentiality of Essence Principle, then the *de dicto* interpretation of the thesis is required to count as revelation.

This obviously implies the question about how to treat *Q-me* revelation. If, on the one hand, we assume that this view only requires *de re* knowledge, then it is no longer a form of revelation. However, if, on the other hand, we claim *de dicto* knowledge, then the thesis's plausibility is doubtful. Interestingly *Q-me* revelation is already construed in a way that it explicitly entails *de dicto* knowledge. The thesis claims that by having an experience *E* with some phenomenal property *Q*, I am in a position to know or know that *E* is essentially *Q-me*. This means the thesis does *not* state something like this:

By having an experience *E* with phenomenal property *Q*, I am in a position to know or know that *E* is *Q-me*, and as a matter of fact, this is essential.

On the contrary, I claim that I explicitly know, by having the relevant experience *E* with phenomenal property *Q*, that *Q-me* is the essence of *E*. In my opinion, a revelation thesis could not be stated more strongly.

Does this mean that *Q-me* revelation is implausible? In short, I do not think so. The two considerations that make a strong version of revelation implausible are Lihoreau's/Stoljar's claim that one does not need a concept of essence to have e.g. an itch, and Lewis's claim that revelation is not compatible with physicalism. The first argument considers something like this: if strong versions of revelation were true, then by having e.g. an itch I am in a position to know or know the essence of that itch *de dicto*. This means, I cannot have an itch without already knowing what the essence of an itch is. According to Lihoreau and Stoljar, this is absurd, since having an itch experience does not require knowledge about what makes this itch experience the itch experience it is.

⁵⁷² Lihoreau 2014, p. 73.

There is, however, a way to block this argumentation, namely by assuming that conscious experiences are non-conceptual in principle. In the case of *Q-me* revelation, this means that we need to assume that phenomenal properties – which entail both subjective and qualitative properties – are non-conceptual. This implies a first (ontological) claim about what is common to all experiences. By having an itch I am in a position to know or know that it is an experiential mental state and not some other mental state. This is due to the fact that this state entails pre-reflective self-awareness, or subjective properties, which are revealed. *Q-me* revelation does, however, not imply that I have to know this in an explicit manner. The reason is that pre-reflective self-awareness is non-conceptual. This means that, even if *Q-me* revelation constantly reveals the presence of this kind of awareness, it is only when forming judgments about this ontological fact that I apply certain concepts.

A second claim, then, is about particular qualitative properties. *Q-me* revelation defends that we have privileged access to those qualities. Now, there is a problem strong revelation raises here. Supposably, we need to have a concept of the essence of the particular quality present, e.g. what makes an itch an itch. I, however, claim that since we may assume that itchiness is non-conceptual, Stoljar's respectively Lihoreau's concern does not occur.

At this point, I will try to explain why, in my opinion, this is the case. The basic reason, or so I claim, is that one can refine *Q-me* revelation further.⁵⁷³ A first approach may be the following:

Q-me revelation: By having an experience E with the phenomenal property Q, I *know* that E is essentially *Q-me*.

At a first glance, this seems to be the original thesis. This is, however, not entirely correct, since, strictly speaking, it cannot result in knowledge. Due to the fact that this interpretation of *Q-me* revelation involves a permanent confrontation with non-conceptual, pre-reflective self-awareness, respectively non-conceptual qualities, we

⁵⁷³ Both ideas were used as equivalent so far.

should rather think of it as a form of implicit cognizance than some kind of knowledge. The thesis should, therefore, be stated like this:

Implicit *Q-me* revelation: By having an experience E with the phenomenal property Q, I *implicitly cognize* that E is essentially *Q-me*.

This means that by having e.g. an itch, since the itch is non-conceptual, I do not know that it is an itch. I also do not have an explicit concept of what an itch is in its essence. However, I claim that I already implicitly cognize the itch as an itch in its essence. This form of cognizance cannot be described as knowledge that I am having, but as relevant for the behavior I am applying. This means, even though I do not possess the concept of what itchiness is in its essence, I still cognize the itchiness in its essence by scratching the itch rather than showing pain behavior. *Q-me* revelation implicit, then, does not include conceptual object knowledge about the relevant property in form of a proposition, it only entails that I can experientially grasp this property to apply e.g. the appropriate behavior. I, therefore, do not possess a concept of essence, which makes it the *de re* version of this view. As a consequence, the *Q-me* revelation thesis about explicit knowledge should be stated the following way:

Explicit *Q-me* revelation: By having an experience E with the phenomenal property Q, I am in a position to know that E is essentially *Q-me*.

This distinction is of the highest importance. The reason is that the second version requires me to form conceptual judgments, which I claim are certain. Those judgments, however, can only be formed by actively employing introspection and applying the right kinds of concepts. This means that on the contrary to passive cognizing, I have to make an effort and practice epistemology.⁵⁷⁴ In general, the difference can be found in the fact that knowledge is constituted by propositions,

⁵⁷⁴ This theory, therefore, implies the effort condition of introspection. For discussion on the issue see Schwitzgebel 2014.

while implicit cognition is not.⁵⁷⁵ This does not mean that one cannot form concepts about non-conceptual properties. It is rather the case that when presented with those properties, they provoke the right kind of behavior rather than constituting knowledge. Propositional knowledge can only be obtained, if the right kinds of concepts are already available to me. Practicing epistemology means, in this context, that I am able to apply them correctly. Q-me revelation implicit puts me in the position to do so. However, if we want a substantial revelation thesis about knowledge, then we need to assume the latter, explicit version. This interpretation of the thesis implies also that we already have to possess some concept of essence, therefore constituting the *de dicto* version of this view. The absurd consequence this idea usually entails is avoided by assuming the former, implicit revelation thesis. This version does not lead to knowledge; it is only relevant for our behavior. Therefore, even if Q-me revelation explicit is correct, we can still have an experience without already possessing a concept of essence.

This approach however raises at least four issues. The first matter concerns how we can distinguish between cognizing and knowing. Now, I have already stated that when we cognize, we do not employ concepts. It is, however, the case that it is behaviorally relevant. Consider the itch again. Even though having an itch experience does not necessarily cause explicit introspective knowledge, namely that I am having an itch, it provokes the right kind of behavior, at least in normal conditions. This means, when I have an itch, I scratch it. I do not show pain behavior. I consciously cognize that what I am having is an itch and show the right behavior, but I do not necessarily employ the relevant concept, namely that an itch is present. Knowledge, however, necessarily involves those concepts. Only when I apply such a concept, it can be said that I possess knowledge.

This idea results in a second, related issue. What exactly is the relation between cognizing and knowing? My straight forward claim is that, in the case of phenomenal properties, cognition is basic and necessary for knowledge. First one has to cognize a phenomenal property and make it consciously available. This process is especially important for our behavior, but also as a basis for any kind of knowledge about the

⁵⁷⁵ For detailed discussion see e.g. Speaks 2005.

phenomenal property in question. Now, if *Q-me* revelation is correct, then cognizing is as *immediate* or *direct* as a process can be. This is the case in at least three senses: a) it is metaphysically immediate or direct; b) it is in a sense immediately or directly motivated⁵⁷⁶; and c) it is existentially immediate or direct.

According to c), by having an experience E with phenomenal property Q implies that I cognize that E is essentially *Q-me*. This means, it is not a choice or optional. The existence of the former is necessary and sufficient for the existence of the latter. Cognizing is therefore existentially immediate or direct.

This fact by itself does not mean that it is a) metaphysically immediate or direct. As far as I can see, however, to cognize does not imply a separate mental process. Having an experience E with phenomenal property Q includes that I cognize that E is essentially *Q-me*. If it were not one and the same process, it would be quite mysterious how experiences could have immediate relevance for behavior, in a non-conceptual manner.

Since we are not talking about judgments, it seems that cognizing that E is essentially *Q-me*, is *exclusively* motivated by the experience E with phenomenal property Q, and therefore b). This means, even though one cognizes non-conceptually, this is the immediate way an experience motivates its relevance for a certain behavior.

I hope it becomes clear to the reader what the difference between acquaintance and cognizance is. While acquaintance suffices for knowledge, namely knowledge by acquaintance, cognizance does not. Cognizance may claim a special directness relation with our phenomenal properties in the above three senses, but lacks epistemic directness. Without the epistemic dimension, however, it cannot by itself constitute knowledge.

Knowledge, finally, rides piggyback on cognizance. By actively introspecting and employing the right concepts about one's experience one gains self-knowledge. This means, when I have an experience E with phenomenal property Q, I can come to know

⁵⁷⁶ Since there is no explicit knowledge involved here, I will avoid the statement that cognizing is epistemically immediately or directly justified. The notion 'to motivate' is an ersatz view. Even though it may be interesting to explore the deeper implication of this idea, I will limit myself to the following claim: 'to motivate' is necessary because cognizing is not knowledge. The notion therefore only tries to account for the fact that cognizing is non-conceptual.

explicitly that E is essentially Q-*me*. I can know this with certainty. The reason is that knowing entails cognizing and therefore all its virtues. In the case of phenomenal properties, actively pursuing epistemology of the mind means to turn implicit or non-conceptual cognizing into explicit or conceptual knowledge, by correctly applying the already possessed concepts.

A third matter can be found in Q-*me* itself. Q-*me* revelation states that *I* am in the position to know that E is essentially Q-*me*. Does that mean *I* or *one* is in a position to know Q-*one*? The answer is ambiguous, includes yes and no. It seems to me that since I know how e.g. a red experience is for me, namely red-, I can know what a red experience consists in, in general. This means, assuming that others have experiences, I can know red-*one*. Red-*one*, of course, is from my point of view only so far knowable that I know what a red experience consists in, i.e. that it involves the quality red and an experiencing subject. In this structural sense I can, therefore, know Q-*one*. From this kind of knowledge, however, I cannot know 'what Q-*one* is like *for you*'. I know that to be an experience it has to entail a certain structure, namely qualities and an experiencing subject. Still, I do not know Q-*you* or red-*you*. The reason is that I am not you. The experiential character of the experiencing subject, however, plays a key role. The simple fact that I cannot enter your first-person point of view about your own experiences means that I cannot know them the way you do. This, I can only infer from my experiences. But even if they are similar, they are not identical.

A final concern is whether or not strong versions of revelation should reveal ontological knowledge as well. Lihoreau thinks that if any version of strong revelation were true, then we should assume to be in the position to obtain ontological knowledge about experiences. Independent of whether or not physicalism is true, if we know properties, truths, etc. that form part of the essence of experience, then they have to be revealed as part of the essence. This means that if strong revelation is true, then not only would Lewis be right and one would need to know that pain is C-fiber firing, according to Lihoreau one would need to know that C-fiber firing is entailed in the essence of pain. He concludes however that "[...] discoveries in the metaphysics of

mind, we might say, is not so easy either!”⁵⁷⁷

I, however, think it is. If I am right, philosophers interested in the metaphysics of the phenomenal – *only* by having an experience – should be able to obtain metaphysical knowledge about the structure of the phenomenal. Since they possess a concept of essence to determine whether or not some ontological structure can fulfill the relevant conditions, those metaphysicians are in the position to know this structure. Lihoreau's claim that ontological knowledge, obtained that easily, sounds “incongruous”⁵⁷⁸ may be explained away by an example. The following claim, I assume, does not sound implausible: if an experience E is essentially *Q-me* and I am in a position to know, by having an experience E and a concept of essence, that E is essentially *Q-me*, then this is an ontological claim in the above sense. It is the claim that *Q-me* is entailed in the essence of E and that I can know this. I, however, do not think that this sounds absurd at all. I am in position to know essential properties, namely qualitative and subjective properties, that are constitutive to an experience, and I know those properties are essential. In my opinion, then, Lihoreau has no good reason to assume that metaphysics of the mind is *not* that easy.⁵⁷⁹

The problem Lihoreau posts stems in part from Lewis's assumption that if physicalism were true, then – via revelation – we would need to know that pain is C-fiber firing without empirical research. The problem of compatibility with physicalism, however, exists whether or not we assume strong or weak versions of revelation.⁵⁸⁰ The final question, then, is whether or not *Q-me* revelation needs to put me in a position to know the neuro-physical correlates of pre-reflective self-awareness to be compatible with physicalism.

To get this analysis off the ground, consider first anti-physicalism. It is often assumed that if it were true that pain is not C-fiber firing or otherwise physically realized essentially, then we should know it. In this version, then, we should be in a

⁵⁷⁷ Lihoreau 2014, p. 75.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵⁷⁹ I think that Lihoreau may underestimate what is necessary in such a case. It clearly excludes anyone who does not have a concept of essence. This means that even though anyone may eventually learn a concept of essence, until she does, she is not in a position to know the ontological structure of the phenomenal *only* by having an experience.

⁵⁸⁰ In general, I will use, therefore, both versions interchangeably. Where it makes a particular difference, e.g. the final claim about revelation *Q-me*, I will note it.

position to know whether or not pain is primitive or ontologically independent. I think, however, that such a claim is just as implausible as in the physicalism case. It only works, if we assume that ontological independence automatically leads to epistemic specialness. But this clearly needs further argumentation. The consequence is that revelation in general might have trouble to reveal certain essences which justify the thesis. The more urgent question, however, should be what revelation has to reveal to be plausible in the first place.

Surely, a revelation thesis has to reveal some essences of experience. Also, in agreement with Lihoreau and Stoljar, it has to reveal those essences as essences. It seems to me, therefore, that revelation has to be qualified carefully to make sense. *Q-me* revelation, for example, is a version of the thesis that is about essential properties involved in experience, namely qualitative properties and subjective properties. *Q-me*, therefore, is the essence of the phenomenal. This means, *Q-me* revelation is about the properties that make the phenomenal the phenomenal. There is, however, a difference between *Q-me* and C-fiber firing. While the latter is a physical property by definition, the former seems neutral. This idea has, at a first glance, no bearing on the issue. What *Q-me* revelation states about e.g. a red experience, are the following two things: by having the red experience with a phenomenal red property, I am thereby in a position to know that (a) phenomenal red is essentially entails qualitative plus subjective properties (general knowledge claim) and (b) phenomenal red is essentially red qualities and subjective properties (particular knowledge claim).⁵⁸¹ Basically, b) is a justification for privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal. It, of course, also involves a) ontological knowledge about the structure of an experience, but not about its implementation. This is, however, a problem. Since such a claim runs the risk to be only justifiable by basic Levineian properties, it may lose its explanatory power. Even if *Q-me* revelation, as a strong form of revelation, opens the possibility to ontological knowledge about experience and privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal, the thesis needs to be compatible with physicalism and therefore it must be the case that our pre-reflective self-awareness is embodied.

⁵⁸¹ This does not mean that phenomenal red is composed. It is ontologically only *one* property. For this view see footnote 539.

The remaining question, therefore, is whether or not Q-*me* revelation needs to reveal, apart from the entailed properties, the physical implementation of the minimal self. At a first glance, a positive answer seems absurd. Following Lewis, gaining knowledge in neuro-science is not that easy. The standard solution for an essence claim that involves knowledge of properties – as explained in the third chapter – is to assume *a posteriori* physicalism. This implies that we only have to know a property under some kind of concept. Revelation, therefore, does not have to reveal the physical concept in particular. In this case, it is not necessary to know the physical implementation of the minimal self; it is enough to know this property under e.g. a phenomenal concept. Of course, this may be considered a viable solution, but only if one can solve all the problems that *a posteriori* physicalism posts. In the end, it seems that this is maybe more problematic than beneficial, it may, therefore, be appropriate to consider an alternative solution.

At a first glance, for Q-*me* revelation to reveal that pre-reflective self-consciousness is physical; only two options come to mind. I can assume that either the following must be the case: if physicalism is true, then subjective properties are realized by specific brain processes, and due to strong revelation I have to know that those processes are essential; or: if anti-physicalism is true, then those properties are ontologically independent, and due to strong revelation I have to know that this is essentially that way. If what I have said so far is correct, then both cases are implausible and we are exactly where Lihoreaus's argument points to: metaphysics of the mind is not so easy!

Is that it, or is there a solution? I think there may be a way out. Imagine that we take a general thesis of embodiment to be a serious alternative. This view basically states that pre-reflective self-awareness is bodily located. In such an alternative scenario one may suppose that, since physicalism is true, one is in a position to know that subjective properties are essentially physical, however lacks the knowledge about their specific instantiation. So far, it was mostly assumed that physicalism means mind/brain identity. This means that e.g. pain is identical to C-fiber firing and may only be realized in this particular way.⁵⁸² One could however assume the more plausible

⁵⁸² The reason, why this is problematic for revelation, is that it includes the claim that pain is essentially

multiple realizability thesis. In this case, pain may still be identical to C-fiber firing, but there may be other ways it can be realized.⁵⁸³ Clearly, this latter idea is silent about the exact physical instantiation. It is, therefore, not essential to having an experience. The resulting view, however, is still compatible with physicalism.

At this point, the reader may remember that this idea is not new; it was already introduced by Damnjanovic in a similar context and refuted. Two problems were posted that led to the refusal of this possibility. The first issue was based on the difference between strong/weak revelation and the knowledge of '*all* essential properties'. The second problem concerned the metaphysical implications and scope of multiple realizability.

In Damnjanovic's case, the former idea was supposed to solve a particular problem posted by the interpretation '*all* essential properties'. It was assumed that if we need to know '*all* essential properties', we need to know them 'all the way down'. Such an approach, however, seemed not to be feasible. To avoid this inflation of properties, Damnjanovic suggested that we could assume multiple realizability. In this case, the internal physical composition of those properties was rendered not essential and therefore restricted the scope of revelation via considerations that were not entailed by the theory. My critique was based on the idea that since the above theory is a weak version of revelation, one has to know *all* properties to include *all* essential properties anyways. I argued, therefore, that limiting the possible forms of physicalism does not lead to a general solution, since one cannot distinguish essential and non-essential properties. The problematic consequence was that the situation is similar to the 'all the way down' issue.

Apart from being an ineffective form of qualification, I criticized that it is far from clear how to deal with the problem of one particular form of physicalism. The first issue was based on metaphysical considerations. Since there is an ongoing debate about which kind of physicalist approach may be plausible it seemed to be best to stick to physicalism in general, rather than a particular version. The more important issue reflected the problem that it is far from clear how to restrict multiple realizability

C-fiber firing.

⁵⁸³ In this case, pain is *not* essentially C-fiber firing.

correctly. Even if internal composition is not essential, it seems that it is also not arbitrary. It was, therefore, not clear to me *per se* how to qualify multiple realization, to apply a credible physicalist account.

Following those ideas seems to me hopeless. By now, however, we know that we may have to assume the strong interpretation of revelation anyway. This means that by having an experience E with phenomenal property Q, we are in a position to know for every essential property F of Q that Q is F and we have to know that Q is F essentially. This may easily hold for Damjanovic's trivial case, namely that "it is sufficient [...] that the taste of peaches is identical to the taste of peaches."⁵⁸⁴ Of course, we also have to know that this is essentially the case. This version is clearly compatible with multiple realizability, since if true the internal physical composition is not essential. However, there is no *a priori* reason to assume this physicalist approach over another. This view therefore lacks accuracy.

In my opinion Q-me revelation can provide us with the accuracy needed. Allowing for multiple realizability is not simply assumed to enable the plausibility of the thesis. It is rather the case that Q-me revelation reveals multiple realizability, by revealing embodiment and functionalism. The question is whether or not there is any justification to support this claim.

To answer this question, consider pain. Following Aydede⁵⁸⁵, pain may be interpreted in two different ways. The first interpretation of pain is the bodily location. We feel it as located somewhere in the body. The second notion is about pain as an experience, this means that it is subjective. If Q-me revelation is right, then we experience pain in both ways. Clearly the experience is subjective, but it also involves experiencing it as tissue damage of a certain bodily region. What makes the experience subjective is that it involves the subject of experience in its pre-reflective and experiential manner. So, when I feel pain, I usually experience it as tissue damage happening to me or the pain function $me(R_{\text{pain}})$. Since this function entails the body, it seems that I pre-reflectively identify this body, not as any body, but as my body where I am situated or embodied. $Me(R_{\text{pain}})$, however, is clearly a version of physicalism that

⁵⁸⁴ Damjanovic 2012, p. 84.

⁵⁸⁵ For detailed discussion on the issue see Aydede 2013.

supports various possible realizations. If this is correct, then we should assume that there is phenomenal justification for the claim that embodiment – and, therefore, multiple realizability – is revealed.

The consequential question, however, is why this view does not reveal the specific brain processes involved, but only embodiment in general. *Q-me* revelation suggests this is the case because the specific implementation is not essential. If it were essential, it would be revealed. This means, if mind/brain identity were correct, *Q-me* revelation would need to show it. *Q-me* revelation is, therefore, not a revelation thesis that proves physicalism wrong, it is rather a further argument against mind/brain identity.

Now, I am convinced that my arguments for privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal are solid. Since I was able to illustrate that every item on the list, posted in the beginning of this chapter, can be implemented, I am confident that this view can stand its ground. In practice, I have shown the following:

- The interpretation as *Q-me* revelation is a viable version of the revelation thesis about the nature of experience. It qualifies the thesis as knowledge of '*the* essential property'.
- *Q-me* revelation reveals the components of that essential property, namely representational qualities and pre-reflective self-awareness. It, therefore, reveals phenomenal *Q-me*-ism.
- Phenomenal *Q-me*-ism is a plausible ontological account of the phenomenal, respectively experience, since it fulfills all the necessary conditions.
- *Q-me* revelation explains primarily ontological knowledge about the phenomenal/experience. However, based on this knowledge, it also justifies the privileged access to the phenomenal.
- Finally, *Q-me* revelation is compatible with physicalism by revealing embodiment.

CONCLUSION

I started with the more than problematic Cartesian idea that we can grasp the foundation of knowledge. My claim was that, despite Descartes's ambitious goal, he rigorously applied the privileged access intuition to our own mental states to justify his view. We may, of course, profoundly doubt the Cartesian conclusion that the *cogito* argument provides us with foundational knowledge, but even today we seem to be – at least in certain contexts – open-minded towards the privileged access. This does not mean that anyone claims this kind of access to our entire mental life. Especially since psychology showed us how wrong we are most of the time, this folk psychological intuition is mostly restricted to conscious experiences and their phenomenal properties.

The main task of this investigation was an attempt to justify this notion. The reason was the fact that we usually assume other instantiations of knowledge to be different in principal. Many philosophers think that, under normal circumstances, the knowledge relation to be causal and contingent. Privileged self-knowledge, however, is supposed to be direct and certain, at best. After clarifying the relevant ideas, including the privileged access intuition itself, self-knowledge and further ideas about the phenomenal, I argued that, up to this point, there is no basis for believing in this intuition. The main problem, or so I claim, is that basically all efforts for justification stem from the highly controversial acquaintance approach. I argue that this notion, however, does not give us any reason to believe in the privileged access. It is basically as mysterious as the intuition itself. At this point, I could have concluded that the privileged access is just another folk psychological concept that should be erased. In my opinion, however, my research was able to show that privileged self-knowledge about the phenomenal is not as lost as it may seem. We simply need to dig deeper for an explanation and base it on the controversial revelation thesis.

Now, as any kind of knowledge, self-knowledge needs to be justified. If we assume the privileged access, however, the way to ground it is decisively different. As

stated in the last paragraph, we may consider Russell's acquaintance approach⁵⁸⁶. Knowledge by acquaintance follows from the thesis's directness claim. On the one hand, this account entails epistemic directness. Justification, therefore, only depends on the phenomenal. Interesting, however, is that most contemporary philosophers thought, on the other hand, that this is the way to integrate the phenomenal reality and its corresponding judgments.⁵⁸⁷ By tying those judgments directly to their truthmaker, acquaintance also entails metaphysical directness. Independent of their ontological view about the phenomenal, most of those convinced by the privileged access tried to establish an explanation for this intuition via acquaintance.

However, there seems to be something profoundly wrong with this idea. Following Levine and his 'Material Constraint'⁵⁸⁸, acquaintance cannot constitute the needed explanation. This is due to two reasons: i) either the thesis introduces basic properties/relations; or ii) it cannot be explained by the underlying physical structure. The former case points to the fact that an explanation should not introduce further mysteries. Acquaintance is supposed to make reasons that account for the privileged access to the phenomenal explicit. If i) is, however, true, then this view fails. In the latter case, the doubt stems from the consideration that, since acquaintance is a cognitive relation, it cannot be explained by some underlying physical relation. Privileged self-knowledge is, therefore, a myth.

Even though acquaintance fails, it is a noble attempt to rescue this treasured intuition. At this point, one could simply drop privileged self-knowledge or find a different explanation. I decided for the latter and investigated alternative approaches to justify the privileged access. In this context, I considered some underlying ideas that constitute privileged knowledge⁵⁸⁹ in general. It seemed to me appropriate to maintain the strongest notion, namely certainty, and, therefore, adopt infallibility and omniscience.

Now, how can we establish certainty? In a first step, we need to consider

⁵⁸⁶ See Russell 1967.

⁵⁸⁷ For detailed discussion see Gertler 2012a.

⁵⁸⁸ See Levine 2007.

⁵⁸⁹ For a list of what may constitute epistemic privilege see Alston 1971.

'epistemic principles'⁵⁹⁰ that put us in the right kind of epistemic position. Most principles, however, are too weak to begin with. Self-presentation tied certainty to what seems reasonable to a given subject, abandoning, therefore, a strong interpretation of the concept. Understanding merely includes knowledge in an ordinary sense. As a consequence, it only entails degrees of justified knowledge, ignoring certainty entirely. Finally, we need to consider revelation. Since this view is located in the intersection of infallibility and a qualified version of omniscience, namely self-intimation⁵⁹¹, this thesis is clearly a candidate to constitute certainty.

After introducing the original idea and clarifying its implications⁵⁹², I turned to the question of whether or not the revelation thesis may count as an alternative explanation for the privileged access. Since the thesis is clearly strong enough, I considered possible interpretations. The main reason for this strategy was that an unqualified revelation thesis is, according to Lewis⁵⁹³, not compatible with physicalism and, therefore, *prima facie* not better off than acquaintance. Interesting enough, a first way to restrict the revelation thesis is by tying it to the acquaintance approach. This possibility was already introduced by Russell⁵⁹⁴. Needless to say, I concluded that qualifying revelation in this way is implausible. The reason is that the resulting account suffers from the same problems as the original approach. I concluded, however, that it was still necessary to discuss this account, since it establishes the independence of revelation from acquaintance.

A second way to restrict revelation was to claim that it entails knowledge of 'all essential truths'. Many critics⁵⁹⁵ of the Russellian approach thought that this to be the right interpretation. The idea, however, leaves us with a fundamental problem. How can we secure that this version of the thesis is compatible with physicalism? Since I have to know *all* essential truths, and, therefore, possess *all* the relevant concepts, I should clearly know the phenomenal property in question, under its physical concept. This, however, is Lewis critique and, therefore, implausible. The only way to solve this

⁵⁹⁰ See Stoljar 2009 for discussion.

⁵⁹¹ See Byrne & Hilbert 2007.

⁵⁹² See Johnston 1992, Lewis 1995, Russell 1967 and Strawson 1989 for views and criticism.

⁵⁹³ See Lewis 1995.

⁵⁹⁴ See Russell 1967.

⁵⁹⁵ See e.g. Byrne & Hilbert 2007 and Lewis 1995.

issue is to assume *a posteriori* physicalism and claim that we can only know the identity between a phenomenal property and a physical property *a posteriori*. Following Damjanovic⁵⁹⁶, I argued that this is a problematic approach. However, I am convinced that I could show that the original reason Damjanovic has in mind fails. My argument is based on the simple conviction that if revelation reveals *all* essential truths with the corresponding concepts, and physicalism is true, then the physical concept should be revealed as well. I argued, therefore, that introducing a highly problematic interpretation of physicalism does not justify this version of revelation.

Being a step in the right direction, I considered a further interpretation of revelation, namely knowledge of '*all* essential properties or facts'. In this case, we do not need to know those facts under every possible concept, we only need to have some concept of the relevant property or fact. Even though this view still entails *a posteriori* physicalism, the proponent of this view does not generally seem to be worse off than any other physicalist. At a first glance, this version of revelation seemed to be an elegant solution to Lewis's worry. Looking closer, however, revealed its flaws. The thesis's problem is the fact that it is unrestricted. Revelation has to reveal '*all* essential facts'. I concluded that even if we do not follow Damjanovic's claim - the need to know *all* essential properties *all* the way down – we still have to know *all* properties period. This is clearly an inflation of the essence claim and not suitable for revelation.

As a consequence, I concluded that we have to restrict this account of the thesis correctly. One way was to assume only knowledge of the counterfactual extensions of phenomenal concepts. This view tries to limit the essential features of an experience to those stable in all possible worlds. To separate essential features from accidental features, one needs to know the counterfactual extensions of the relevant phenomenal concept. Those which are stable in all possible worlds define the essential features. My critique of this approach was based on Chalmers's 'master argument'⁵⁹⁷ against this strategy. In my view, then, one has to limit revelation differently.

The best way to qualify revelation is to restrict it to *one* essential property. This means we also have to break with the old dichotomic view about experiences. An

⁵⁹⁶ See Damjanovic 2012.

⁵⁹⁷ See Chalmers 2007.

experience is, therefore, nothing over its phenomenal properties. Those properties consist in representational qualities and the subjective function, where those qualities are processed. The essence that revelation, therefore, reveals is that an experience *E* with the phenomenal property *Q* is essentially *Q-me*, or *me(R_Q)*. This view of revelation, or *Q-me* revelation, is based on an ontological account called phenomenal *Q-me*-ism. The decisive advantage is that there is only *one* essential property, namely *Q-me*-ness and *Q-me* revelation puts me in the position to know this. Of course, gaining such knowledge involves more than having the relevant experience. By having an experience, I can only cognize its essence. It is only after carefully conducting epistemology and metaphysics that I can finally know what revelation claims.

A second advantage of this version of revelation is that it is compatible with physicalism. Even assuming a strong *de dicto* version of this view, i.e. I have to have a concept of essence, does not affect the thesis. *Q-me* revelation is divided in an implicit version, which allows me to have experiences without having a concept of essence, and an explicit version, which demands such a concept. To be compatible with physicalism, therefore, this account reveals embodiment. As a consequence, *Q-me* revelation does not violate physicalism, it merely represents a further argument against mind/brain identity.

Assuming that my arguments for *Q-me* revelation were sound and the thesis is compatible with physicalism, how does it justify the privileged access intuition? Well, *Q-me*-ness may only be the ontological description of the structure of experience. However, a concrete cases, entailing e.g. *red-me*, present us with the solution. Since a particular experience simply is a red quality in the *me* function, or better the red quality is processed in me, there is only *one* structural property present. Therefore, if I can know *Q-me*, I can know *red-me*. As a consequence, my judgment about *red-me* is certain. Of course, this presupposes that I have the relevant concept. Nonetheless, revelation *Q-me* puts me in the position to know this. The privileged access to the phenomenal is, therefore, justified.

Evidently, this is only a small piece of the puzzle. Many questions for future research are still open. Especially the role of the *me* function, or what the self brings to the table, needs further investigation. Also, related questions, e.g. 'what creatures, or

machines, actually have experiences?', or 'what conditions do we presuppose for the constitution of a self?', need to be analyzed. In my opinion, however, justifying the privileged access, in both an epistemological and a metaphysical sense, is a step into the right direction.

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